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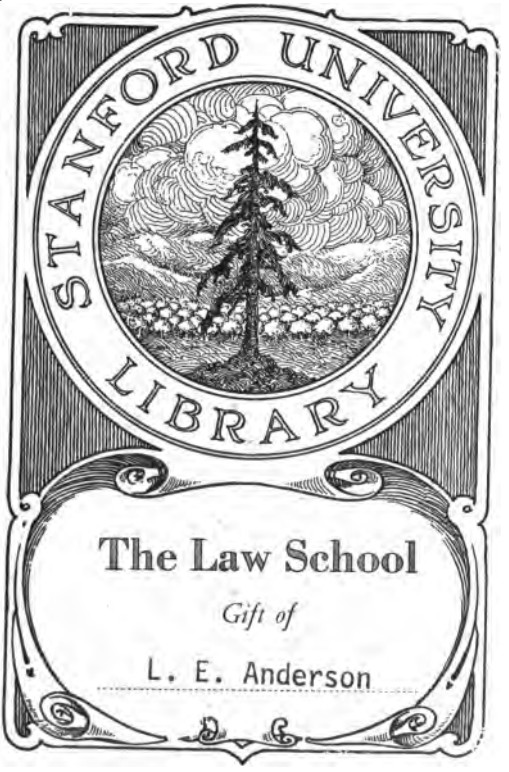
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MORTMAIN

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1928

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MORTMAIN

I

SIR PENNISTON CRISP was a man of some sixty active years, whose ruddy cheeks, twinkling blue eyes, and convincingly innocent smile suggested forty. At thirty he had been accounted the most promising young surgeon in London; at forty he had become one of the three leading members of his profession; at fifty he had amassed a fortune and had begun to accept only those cases which involved complications of true scientific interest, or which came to him on the personal application of other distinguished physicians.

Like many another in the medical world whose material wants are guaranteed, he found solace and amusement only in experimentation along new lines of his peculiar hobbies. His days were spent between his book-lined study with its cheery sea-coal fire and his adjacent laboratory, where three assistants, all trained Bachelors of Science, conducted experiments under his personal direction.

His daily life was as well ordered as his career had been. Rising at seven, Sir Penniston partook of a meager breakfast, attended to his trifling personal affairs, read his newspaper, dictated his letters, and by nine was ready to don his uniform and receive his sterilized in-

struments from his young associate, Scalscope Jermyn, a capable and cheerful soul after Crisp's own heart. An operating theater adjoined the laboratory, and here the baronet made it a point to perform once each week, in the presence of various surgeons who attended by invitation, a few difficult and dangerous operations upon patients sent to him from the City Hospital.

When Jermyn was with his familiars he was wont to refer to his master as the "howlingist cheese in surgery." This was putting it mildly, for, although Sir Penniston was indubitably, if you choose, quite the "howlingist cheese" in surgery, he was also a pathfinder, an explorer into the mysteries of the body and the essence of vitality in bone and tissue. He could do more things to a cat in twenty minutes than would naturally occur in the combined history of a thousand felines. He could handle the hidden arteries and vessels of the body as confidently and accurately as you or I would tie a shoe string. He had housed a tramp for thirteen months and inserted a plate-glass window in that gentleman's exterior in order that he might with the greater certainty study the complicated processes of a digestion stimulated after a chronic lack of food. He experimented on men, women, children, elephants, apes, ostriches, guinea pigs, rabbits, turtles, frogs, and goldfish. He could alter the shape of a nose, or perfect an irregular ear in the twinkling of an instrument; remove a human heart and insert it still beating without inconvenience to its owner; and was as much at home among the vessels of Thebesius as he was on Piccadilly Circus.

He was single, kept but one servant—a Jap—neither smoked nor drank, attended the worst play he could find

every Saturday night, and gave ponderous dinners to his professional brethren on Wednesdays. He was the dean of his order, and bade fair to remain so for a long time to come—a calm, passionless craftsman in flesh and bone. His rivals frequently were heard to say that there was nothing surgical in heaven or earth that Crisp would not undertake. A faint odor of chloroform followed his well-regulated progress through existence.

On the morning upon which this narrative opens Sir Penniston had entered his laboratory with that urbanity so characteristic of him. A white frock hung jauntily upon his well-filled, if slenderly nourished, proportions, his blue eyes sparkled with good-natured activity, and his long, muscular hands rubbed themselves together in a manner which signified that they were anxious to be at the skilled work in which their owner took so keen a pleasure. Scalscope was already on hand, and with a bundle of dripping instruments in his grasp met his master halfway between the minor operating table and the antiseptic bath.

"Ah, good morning, Scalscope! How is the Marchioness of Cheshire this fine morning?"

Scalscope smiled deferentially at the little joke.

"I presume you mean Lady Tabitha? Her ladyship is doing splendidly—better, I fancy, than could be expected under the circumstances."

"Excellent, Scalscope! Delightful! Where is she?"

At that moment a large Maltese cat, cognizant by some unknown instinct that she was the subject of this matutinal conversation, stalked slowly out of a patch of sunshine and rubbed herself between Sir Penniston's broadcloth-covered calves. The surgeon bent over and felt carefully of her foreleg, but the feline did not flinch;

on the contrary, she screwed round her head and thrust it into the doctor's hand.

"Perfect!" exclaimed Sir Penniston, his face lighting with a smile of scientific satisfaction. "Absolutely perfect! Scalscope, you have lived to participate in the highest achievement of modern surgery! Is the patient in the operating room? Very good. The gentlemen assembled? Excellent! While you are administering the somni-chloride I will announce our success."

He bowed to the other assistants and, followed by the Marchioness of Cheshire, opened the door which led to the platform of the operating theater. Some dozen or fifteen professional-looking gentlemen rose as he made his appearance and bowed. A young woman with her arm in a sling sat by the table attended by a couple of women nurses.

"Good morning, gentlemen! Good morning!" remarked Sir Penniston. "Mr. Jermyn, will you kindly prepare the patient? My friends, I have the pleasure of being able to announce to you, and thus permitting you in a measure to share in, what I regard as the most extraordinary achievement of our profession."

A murmur of interest and appreciation made itself audible from the physicians who had resumed their seats upon the benches. If Sir Penniston regarded anything as remarkable, it must indeed be so, and they awaited his next words expectantly.

"The problem, gentlemen, of limb-grafting has been solved!" he announced modestly.

The assembled surgeons gazed at one another in amazement.

"You may perhaps recall," continued the baronet, "that it has for years been my particular hobby, or, I

should more properly say, theory, that there was no reason in the world why, if a severed finger or a nose could be replaced by surgery, the same should not be true of a major part, such as a hand or leg; and why, if a limb once severed could be replaced upon its stump, another person's might not be used.

"Many gentlemen eminent in our profession, some of whom I believe I see before me, gave it as their opinion that such an operation was impossible. A few—and most of these, I regret to say, were upon the other side of the Atlantic—agreed with me that it could and would ultimately be accomplished. I studied the problem for years. Was it our inability to nourish a part once severed or so to reënervate it as to unite tendons, muscles, or bone? The latter surely gave no trouble. Tendons were sutured every day, and under favorable circumstances their functions were restored, while nerves were frequently sutured and functional restoration recorded.

"The question, therefore, seemed to narrow itself down to whether or not it was impossible to restore an arterial supply once cut off. Veins, of course, were frequently cut and sutured, and performed perfectly afterwards. Was there no way to restore an artery? In other words, could a limb once severed be sufficiently nourished to restore it? This, then, became my special study—a fascinating study indeed, involving as it did the possibilities of untold benefit to mankind."

Sir Penniston paused and glanced toward the table upon which was extended the now almost unconscious form of the patient. There was still plenty of time for him to conclude his remarks.

"With a view, therefore, to observing whether a thin glass tube would be tolerated in a sterilized state within

an artery (the only possible means I could devise to allow a continued flow of blood and contemporaneous restoration), I made a number of half-inch pieces to suit the caliber of a dog's femoral, constricted them very slightly to an hour-glass shape, and smoothed their ends by heat, so that no surface roughness should induce clotting. Cutting the femorals across, I tied each end on the tube by a fine silk thread, and tied the thread ends together. Primary union resulted, and the dog's legs were as good as ever! The first step had been successfully accomplished."

The assembled surgeons clapped their hands faintly in token of appreciation, and one or two murmured, "My word! — Extraordinary! — Marvelous!" Sir Penniston bowed slightly and resumed:

"I now added one more step to my experiments. I dissected out the trachial artery and vein near the axilla of a dog's forelimb, and, holding these apart, amputated the limb through the shoulder muscles and sawed through the bone, leaving the limb attached only by the vessels. I then sutured the bone with a silver wire and the nerves with fine silk. Each muscle I sutured by itself with catgut, making a separate series of continuous suturing of the *fascia lata* and skin. The leg was then enveloped in sterilized dressing, a liberal use of iodoform gauze being the essential part. Over all, cotton and a plaster jacket were placed, leaving him three legs to walk on. The dog's leg united perfectly."

The assembled gentlemen broke into loud applause. The patient was lying motionless, her deep inspirations showing that she was under the anæsthetic. But Sir Penniston was now lost in the enthusiasm of his subject.

"Thus, gentlemen, I demonstrated that, if in an

amputated limb an artery could be left, the limb would survive the division and reuniting of everything else, and had good ground for the belief that if an arterial supply could be restored to a completely amputated limb, *that* limb also might be grafted back to its original or to a corresponding stump.

"The final experiment only remained—the complete amputation of a limb and its restoration—a combination of all the others—difficult, dangerous, delicate—and requiring much preparation, assistance, and time. I finally selected a healthy cat, amputated its foreleg, inserted a glass tube in the artery, and sutured bone, muscles, nerves, and skin. Complete restoration occurred! And after four months you have here before you this morning the cat herself, fat, well, and strong, and as good as ever!—Here, kitty, kitty, kitty!"

The Marchioness of Cheshire ran quickly to Sir Penniston and leaped into his lap, while the gentlemen left the benches and hastened forward to seize the master's hand and to examine the cat in wonder.

"There is nothing, therefore, in the way of grafting which cannot be successfully undertaken. A human arm or leg crushed at thigh or shoulder, and requiring amputation, would admit of Esmarch's bandage being applied to expel its blood and of being used after amputation. Why not another man's blood as well as its owner's? No reason in the world! Had we here a suitable forearm ready to be applied I have no doubt but that I could successfully replace it upon the stump of the one I am now about to remove. Hereafter, so long as there are limbs enough to go round—so long as the demand does not transcend the supply—none of our patients need fear the permanent loss of a member!"

The surgeons overwhelmed him with their congratulations, but Sir Penniston modestly waived them aside. His triumph was the triumph of science—and its purity was not marred by any thought of personal glorification.

"The Crispan operation," some one whispered. The others caught it up. "The Crispan operation," they repeated. A slight look of gratification made itself apparent upon Sir Penniston's rosy countenance.

"Thank you, gentlemen! Thank you! Mr. Jermyn, is the patient quite ready? Yes? We will proceed, gentlemen. My instruments, if you please."

Among those who left the operating theater an hour later was Sir Richard Mortmain.

II

THE opalescent light from the bronze electric lamp on the mahogany writing table disclosed two gentlemen, whose attitudes and expressions left no doubt as to the serious import of their discussion. At the same time the *membra disjecta* of afternoon tea which remained upon the teak tabaret, together with the still smoking butt of an Egyptian cigarette distilling its incense in a steadily perpendicular gray column toward the ceiling from a jade jar used as an ash receiver, showed that for one of them at least the situation had admitted of physical amelioration. The gentleman beside the table had rested his high, narrow forehead upon the delicate fingers of his left hand, and with contracted eyebrows was gazing in a baffled manner toward his companion, who had extended his limbs at length before the heavy chair in which he reclined, and with his elbows upon its arms was holding his finger tips lightly against each other before his face. To those who knew Ashley Flynt this meant that the last word had been spoken, and that nothing remained but to accept the situation as he stated it and follow his advice.

His heavy yet shrewd countenance, whose florid hue bespoke a modern adjustment of golf to a more traditional use of port, had that cold, vacant look which it displayed when the mind behind the mask had recorded Q. E. D. beneath its unseen demonstration. The gentle-

man at the table twitched his shoulders nervously, slowly raised his head, and leaned back into his chair.

"And you say that there is absolutely nothing which can be done?" he repeated mechanically.

"I have already told you, Sir Richard," replied Flynt in even, incisive tones, "that the last day of grace expires to-morrow. Unless the three notes are immediately taken up you will be forced into bankruptcy. Your property and expectations are already mortgaged for more than they are worth. Your assets of every sort will not return your creditors—I should say your creditor—fifteen per cent. Seventy-nine thousand pounds, principal and interest—can you raise it or even a substantial part of it? No, not five thousand! You have no choice, so far as I can see, but to go into bankruptcy, unless—" He hesitated rather deprecatingly.

"Well!" cried Sir Richard impatiently, "unless——"

"Unless you marry."

The baronet drew himself up and a flush crept into his cheeks and across his forehead.

"As your legal adviser," continued Flynt unperturbed, "I give it as my opinion that your only alternative to bankruptcy is a suitable marriage. Of course, for a man of your position in society a mere engagement might be enough to——"

Sir Richard sprang quickly to his feet and stepped in front of his solicitor.

"To induce the money lenders to advance the amount necessary to put me on my feet? Bah! Flynt, how dare you make such a suggestion! If you were not my solicitor— Good heavens, that I should ever be brought to this!"

Flynt shrugged his shoulders.

"So far as that goes, bankruptcy is the cheapest way to pay one's debts."

His client uttered an ejaculation of disgust. Then suddenly the red deepened in his cheeks and he clenched his white hand until the thin blue veins stood out like cords.

"Curse him!" he cried in a voice shaken by anger. "Curse him now and hereafter! Why did I ever take advantage of his pretended generosity? He meant to ruin me! Why was I ever born with tastes that I could not afford to gratify? Why must I surround myself with music and flowers and marbles? He saw his chance, stimulated my extravagance, seduced my intellect, and now he casts me into the street a beggar! How I hate him! I believe I could *kill* him!"

Sir Richard turned quickly. The door had opened to admit the silent, deferential figure of Joyce, the butler.

"Pardon me, Sir Richard. A clerk from Mr. Flynt's office, sir, with a package. Shall I let him in?"

Mortmain still stood with his fist trembling in mid-air, and it was a moment before he regained sufficient control of himself to reply:

"Yes, yes; let him in."

The butler nodded to some one just behind him, and a nondescript, undersized man cringingly entered the room and stood hesitatingly by the threshold.

"Have you the papers, Flaggs?" inquired Flynt.

"Here, sir," replied the other, drawing forth a bundle tied with red tape and handing it to his employer.

"Very good. You need not return to the office. Good night."

"Good night, sir. Thank you, sir," mumbled Flaggs, and casting a furtive, beetling glance in the direction of Sir Richard, he shambled out.

The solicitor followed him with his eye until the door had closed behind him, and then shrugged his shoulders for the second time.

"My dear Sir Richard," he remarked, "many of our most distinguished peers have gone through bankruptcy. It will all be the same a year hence. Society will be as glad as ever to receive you. Your name will command the same respect and likely enough the same credit. Bankruptcy is still eminently respectable. As for Lord Russell—try to forget him. It is enough that you owe him the money."

Mortmain's anger had been followed by the reaction of despair. Now he groped for a cigarette, and, drawing a jeweled match box from his pocket, lit it with trembling fingers.

Flynt arose.

"That's right!" he exclaimed; "just be sensible about it. Meet me to-morrow at my office at ten o'clock and we will call in Lord Russell's solicitors for a consultation. It will be amicable enough, I assure you. Well, I must be off. Good night." He extended his hand, but Mortmain had thrust his own into his trousers' pockets.

"And you say nothing can prevent this?"

"Why, yes," returned Flynt in a sarcastic tone; "I believe two things can do so."

"Indeed," inquired Sir Richard. "What may they be?"

Flynt had stepped impatiently to the door, which he now held half open. Sir Richard had failed to send him a draft for his last bill.

"A fire from heaven to consume the notes—coupled with the death of Lord Russell—or your own. Good night!"

The door closed abruptly and Sir Richard Mortmain was left alone.

"The death of Lord Russell or my own!" he repeated with a harsh laugh. "Agreeable fellow, Flynt!" Then the bitter smile died out of his face and the lines hardened. Over on the heavy onyx mantel, between two grotesque bronze Chinese vases from whose ponderous sides dragons with bristling teeth and claws writhed to escape, a Sèvres clock chimed six, and was echoed by a dim booming from the outer hall.

Mortmain glanced with regret about the little den that typified so perfectly the futility of his luxurious existence. The deadened walls admitted hardly a suggestion of the traffic outside. By a flower-set window the open piano still held the score of "Madame Butterfly," the opening performance of which he was to attend that evening with Lady Bella Forsythe. A bunch of lilies of the valley stood at his elbow upon the massive table that never bore anything upon its polished surface but an ancient manuscript, an etching, or a vase of flowers. Delicate cabinets showed row upon row of grotesque Capodimonte, rare Sèvres and Dresden porcelains, jade, and other examples of ceramic art. Two Rembrandts, a Corot, and a profile by Whistler occupied the wall space. The mantel was given over to a few choice antique bronzes, covered with verdigris. The only concession to modern utilitarianism was an extension telephone standing upon a bracket in the corner behind the fireplace.

The sole surviving member of his family, Mortmain

had inherited from his father, Sir Mortimer, a discriminating intellect and artistic tastes, united with a gentle, engaging, and unambitious disposition, derived from his Italian mother. Carelessly indifferent to his social inferiors, or those whom he regarded as such, he was brilliantly entertaining with his equals—a man of moods, conservative in habit, yet devoted to society, expensive in his mode of life, given to hospitality—and a spendthrift. These qualities combined to make him caviare to the general, an enigma to the majority, and the favorite of the few, whose favorite he desired to be. He had never married, for his calculation and his laziness had jumped together to convince him that he could be more comfortable, more independent, and more free to pursue his music and kindred tastes, if single. Altogether, Sir Richard, though perhaps a trifle selfish, was by no means a bad fellow, and one whose temperament fitted him to be what he was—a leader in matters of taste, a connoisseur, and an esteemed member of the gay world.

No doubt, as Flynt had suggested, he could have liberated himself financially by donning the golden shackles of an aristocratic marital slavery. But his soul revolted at the thought of marrying for money, not only at the moral aspect of it, but because a certain individual tranquillity had become necessary to his mode of life. He was forty and a creature of habit. A conventional marriage would be as intolerable as earning his living. On the other hand, the odium of a bankruptcy proceeding, the publicity, the vulgarity of it, and the loss of prestige and position which it would necessarily involve brought him face to face with the only alternative which Flynt had flung at him in parting—the death of Lord Russell or his own.

He had known that without being told. Months before, the silver-mounted pistol which was to round out his consistently inconsistent existence had been concealed among the linen in the bureau of his Louis XV bedroom, but it was to be invoked only when no other course remained. That nothing else did remain was clear. Flynt had read his client's sentence in that brutally unconscious jest.

On the day of his interview with Flynt he was one of the most highly regarded critics of music and art in London, and his own brilliant accomplishments as a virtuoso had been supplemented by a lavish generosity toward struggling painters and musicians who found easy access to his purse and table, if not to his heart.

He had introduced Drausche, the Austrian pianist, to the musical world at a heavy financial loss and had made several costly donations to the British Museum, in addition to which his collection of scarabs was one of the most complete on record and demanded constant replenishing to keep up to date. His expensive habits had required money and plenty of it, and when his patrimony had been exhausted he had mortgaged his expectations in his uncle's estate to launch the Austrian genius. It had been a lamentable failure. Mortmain's friends had said plainly enough that Drausche could play no better than his patron. This of itself implied no mean talent, but the public had resolutely refused to pay five shillings a ticket to hear the pianist, and the money was gone. Sir Richard had found himself in the hollow position of playing Mæcenas without the price, and rather than change his pose and his manner of life had borrowed twenty-five thousand pounds four years before from an elderly peer, who combined philanthropy and

what some declared to be usury with a high degree of success.

There were those who hinted that this eminently respectable aristocrat robbed Peter more than he paid Paul, but Lord Gordon Russell was a man with whose reputation it was not safe to take liberties. The next year Mortmain had renewed his note, and, in order to save his famous collection from being knocked down at Christie's, had borrowed twenty-five thousand more. The same thing happened the year after, and now all three notes were three days overdue.

Sir Richard responded to the announcement of the little Sèvres clock by pressing a button at the side of his desk, which summons was speedily answered by Joyce.

"My fur coat, if you please, Joyce."

"Very good, sir." Joyce combined the eye of an eagle with the stolidity of an Egyptian mummy.

Mortmain arose, stepped to the fire, rubbed his thin, carefully kept fingers together, then seated himself at the piano and played a few chords from the overture. As he sat there he looked anything but a bankrupt upon the eve of suicide—rather one would have said, a young Italian musician, just ready to receive and enjoy the crowning pleasures of life. The thin light of the heavily shaded lamps brought out the ivory paleness of his face and hands, and the delicate, sensitive outline of his form, as with eyes half closed and head thrown back he ran his fingers with facile skill across the keyboard.

"Your coat, sir," said Joyce.

Mortmain arose and presented his arms while the servant deftly threw on the seal-lined garment, and handed his master his silk hat, gloves, and gold-headed stick.

"I am going for a short walk, Joyce. I shall be back by seven. You can reach me at the club, if necessary."

Joyce held open the door of the study and then hurried ahead through the luxuriously furnished hall to push open the massive door at the entrance. On the threshold Mortmain turned and, looking Joyce in the eye, said sharply:

"Why did you let that fellow Flaggs follow you to the door of my study, instead of leaving him in the hall?"

"I beg pardon, sir," replied the servant, "but he slipped behind me afore I knew it, sir. He was a rum one, anyway, sir—a bit in liquor, I fancy, sir."

Mortmain turned and passed out without reply. He hated intruders and had not liked the way in which Flynt had calmly received the clerk in his private study. On the whole, he regarded the solicitor as presuming.

It was dark already and the street lamps glowed nebulously through the gathering fog. The air was chilly, and a thick mealy paste, half sleet, half water, formed a sort of icing upon the sidewalk, which made walking slippery and uncomfortable. Few people were abroad, for fashionable London was in its clubs and *boudoirs*, and the workers trudged in an entirely different direction.

The club was but a few streets away, and it was only ten minutes after the hour when he entered it and strolled carelessly through the rooms. No one whom he cared particularly to see was there, and the fresh, if bitter, December air outside seemed vastly preferable to the stuffy atmosphere of the smoke-filled card and reading

rooms. Therefore, as he had nearly an hour before it would be time to dress, he left the club, and, with the vague idea of extending his evening ramble, turned northward. Unconsciously he kept repeating Flynt's words: "The death of Lord Russell or your own." Then, without heed to where he was going, he fell into a reverie, in which he pondered upon the emptiness and uselessness of his life.

At length he entered a large square, and found himself asking what was so familiar in the picket fence and broad flight of steps that led up to the main entrance of the mansion on the corner. A wing of the house made out into a side street and presented three brilliantly lighted windows to the night. Two were empty, but on the white shade of the third, only a few feet above the sidewalk, appeared the sharp shadow of a man's head bending over a table. Now and then the lips moved as if their owner were addressing some other occupant of the chamber. It was the head of an old man, bald and shrunken.

Mortmain muttered an oath. What tricks was Fate trying to play with him by leading his footsteps to the house of the very man who, on the following morning, would ruin him as inevitably and inexorably as the sun would rise! A wave of anger surged through him and he shook his fist at the shadow on the curtain, exclaiming as he had done in his study half an hour before, "Curse him!"

"Ain't got much bloomin' 'air, 'as 'e, guv'nor?" said a thick voice at his elbow.

Sir Richard started back and beheld by the indistinct light of the street lamp the leering face of Flaggs, the clerk.

"Tha'sh yer frien' S'Gordon Russell," continued the other with easy familiarity. "A bloomin' bad un, says I. 'Orrid li'l bald 'ead! Got'sh notes, too. *Your* notes, S'Richard. Don't like 'im myself!"

Mortmain turned faint. This wretched scrivener had stumbled upon or overheard his secret. That he was drunk was obvious, but that only made him the more dangerous.

"Take yourself off, my man. It's too cold out here for you," ordered the baronet, slipping a couple of shillings into his hand.

"Than' you, S'Richard," mumbled Flaggs, leaning heavily in Mortmain's direction. "I accept this as a 'refresher.' Although you've never given me a retainer! Ha! ha! Not so bad, eh? Lemme tell you somethin'. 'Like to kill 'im,' says you? Kill 'im, says I. Le's kill 'im together. 'Ere an' now! Eh?"

"Leave me, do you hear?" cried the baronet. "You're in no condition to be on the street."

Flaggs grinned a sickly grin.

"Same errand as you, your worship. Both 'ere lookin' at li'l old bald 'ead. Look at 'im now——"

He raised his finger and pointed at the window, then staggered backward, lost his balance, and fell over the curb along the gutter. In another instant a policeman had him by the collar and had jerked him to his feet. The fall had so dazed the clerk that he made no resistance.

"I 'ope 'e didn't hoffer you no violence, Sir Richard," remarked the bobby, touching his helmet with his unoccupied hand. "Hit's disgraceful—right in front of Lord Russell's, too!"

"No, he was merely offensive," replied Mortmain,

recognizing the policeman as an old timer on the beat. "Thank you. Good night."

The baronet turned away as the bobby started toward the station house, conducting his bewildered victim by the nape of the neck. Without heeding direction, Mortmain strode on, trying to forget the drunken Flaggs and the little bald head in the window. The clerk's words had created in him a feeling of actual nausea, so that a perspiration broke out all over his body and he walked uncertainly. After he had covered half a mile or so, the air revived him, and, having taken his bearings, he made a wide circle so as to avoid Farringham Square again, and at the same time to approach his own house from the direction opposite to that in which he had started. He still felt shocked and ill—the same sensation which he had once experienced on seeing two navvies fighting outside a music hall. He remembered afterwards that there seemed to be more people on the streets as he neared his home, and that a patrol wagon passed at a gallop in the same direction. A hundred yards farther on he saw a long envelope lying in the slush upon the sidewalk, and mechanically he picked it up and thrust it in the pocket of his coat. Joyce came to the door just as the hall clock boomed seven. Sir Richard had been gone exactly an hour.

"Fetch me a brandy and soda," ordered the baronet huskily, and stepped into the study without removing his furs. The fire had been replenished and was cracking merrily, but it sent no answering glow through Sir Richard's frame. The shadow of the little bald head still rested like a weight upon his brain, and his hands were moist and clammy. He thrust them into his pockets and came into contact with the wet manila cover of

the envelope, and he drew it forth and tossed it upon the table as Joyce entered with the brandy.

The butler removed his master's coat and noiselessly left the room, while Mortmain drained the glass and then carelessly examined the envelope. The names of "Flynt, Steele & Burnham" printed in the upper left-hand corner caught his eye. The names of his own solicitors! That was a peculiar thing. Perhaps Flynt had dropped it—or Flaggs. He turned it over curiously. It was unsealed, as if it had formed one of a package of papers. The baronet lifted the envelope to the lamp and peeped within it. There were three thin sheets of paper covered with writing, and unconsciously he drew them forth and examined them. At the foot of each, in delicate, firm characters, appeared his own name staring him familiarly in the face. In the corners were the unmistakable figures £25,000. He rubbed his forehead and read all three carefully. There could be no doubt of it—they were his own three notes of hand to Lord Gordon Russell. Fate was playing tricks with him again.

"A fire from heaven to consume the notes," Flynt had said. Here were the notes—there was the fire. Had Heaven perhaps really interposed to save him? Was this chance or Providence? With a short breath the baronet grasped the notes and took a step toward the hearth. As he did so the extension telephone by the mantel began to ring excitedly. His heart thumped loudly as, with a feeling of guilt, he relaid the notes upon the table and seized the telephone.

"Yes—yes—this is Mortmain!"

"Richard," came the voice of a friend at the club in anxious tones, "are you there? Are you at home?"

"Yes — yes!" repeated the baronet breathlessly. "What is it?"

"Have you heard the news—the news about Lord Russell?"

Mortmain's head swam with a whirl of premonition.

"No," he replied, trying to master himself, while the perspiration again broke out over his body. "What news? What has happened?"

"Lord Russell was murdered in his library at half after six this evening. Some one gained access to the room and killed the old man at his study table."

"Killed Lord Russell!" gasped Sir Richard. "Have they caught the murderer?"

"No," continued his friend. "The assassin escaped by one of the windows into the street. The police have taken possession. There is nothing to indicate who did the deed. There was blood everywhere. His secretary, a man named Leach, was discharged two days ago and a general alarm has been sent out for him."

"This is terrible," groaned Sir Richard in horror.

"It is, indeed. I thought you ought to know. I may see you at the opera. If not—good night."

The receiver fell from the baronet's fingers, and the room grew black as he clutched at the mantel with his other hand. He staggered slightly, tried to regain his equilibrium, and in so doing upset one of the bronze dragon vases which grinned down upon him.

The vase fell, and the baronet clutched at it in its descent. It was too late. The heavy bronze crashed downward to the floor carrying Sir Richard with it, and one of the verdigris-covered dragon's fangs pierced his right hand.

"Mortmain . . . lay motionless on the floor."

Mortmain uttered a moan and lay motionless on the floor. The little Sèvres clock ticked off forty seconds and then softly chimed the quarter, while the blood from the baronet's hand spurted in a tiny stream upon the rug.

III

WHEN Sir Richard Mortmain next opened his eyes after his fall he found himself in his bedchamber. The curtains were tightly drawn, allowing only a shimmer of sunshine to creep in and play upon the ceiling; an unknown woman in a nurse's uniform was sitting motionless at the foot of his bed; the air was heavy with the pungent odor of iodoform, and his right arm, tightly bandaged and lying extended upon a wooden support before him, throbbed with burning pains. Too weak to move, unable to recall what had brought him to such a pass, he raised his eyebrows inquiringly, and in reply the nurse laid her finger upon her lips and reaching toward a stand beside the bed held a tumbler containing a glass tube to the baronet's lips. Mortmain sucked the contents from the tumbler and felt his pulse strengthen —then weakness manifested itself and he sank back, his lips framing the unspoken question, "What has happened?"

The nurse smiled—she was a pretty, plump young person—not the kind Sir Richard favored (Burne-Jones was his type), and whispered:

"You have been unconscious over twelve hours. You must lie still. You have had a bad fall and your hand is injured."

In some strange and unaccountable way the statement called to Mortmain's fuddled senses a confused rec-

ollection of a scene in Hauptmann's "Die Versunkene Glöcke," and half unconsciously he repeated the words:

"I *fell*. I—fe—l—l!"

"Yes, you did, indeed!" retorted the pretty nurse. "But Sir Penniston will never forgive me if I let you talk. How is your arm?"

"It burns—and burns!" answered the baronet.

"That horrid vase crushed right through the palm. Rather a nasty wound. But you will be all right presently. Do you wish anything?"

Suddenly complete mental capacity rushed back to him. The disagreeable scene with Flaggs, the finding of the notes, the news of Russell's murder, and his accident. The murder! He must learn the details. And the notes. What had he done with them? He could not recollect, try hard as he would. Were they on the table? His head whirled and he grew suddenly faint. The nurse poured out another tumbler from a bottle and again held the tube to his lips. How delicious and strengthening it was!

"Please get me a newspaper!" said Sir Richard.

"A newspaper!" cried the nurse. "Nonsense! I'll do no such thing!"

"Then please see if there are some papers in an envelope lying on the writing table in my private study."

The nurse seemed puzzled. Where aristocratic patients were concerned, particularly if they were in a weakened condition, she was accustomed to accommodate them. She hesitated.

"At once!" added Sir Richard.

The nurse tiptoed out of the room, and in the course of a few moments returned.

"The butler says that Mr. Flynt's clerk, a man named

Faggs, or Flaggs, or something of the sort, came back for them half an hour ago. He explained that he thought Mr. Flynt might have left some papers by mistake, and the butler supposed it was all right and let him have them. The name of your solicitors was upon the envelope."

Sir Richard stared at her stupidly. A queer feeling of horror and distrust pervaded him, the very same feeling which his first sight of the clerk had inspired in him. What could Flaggs have known of the notes? The clerk himself could not have committed the ghastly deed, since he had been under arrest at the time—but might he not have been an accomplice? Were the notes part of some terrible plot to enmesh *him*, Sir Richard Mortmain, in the murder? Was it a scheme of blackmail? The blood surged to his head and dimmed his eyesight. But why had Flaggs taken them away? Had he left them on the street hoping that Sir Richard would find them and bring them into the house, so that he could testify to having found them in the study? But, if so, why had he risked the possibility of their having been destroyed before he could regain them? Such a supposition was most unlikely. It must have been merely chance. The fellow had probably sneaked in simply to see what he could find. And what had he found! A shiver of terrror quenched for an instant the burning of Mortmain's body. A horrible vision of himself standing outside the window of Lord Gordon Russell took shape before him. What if people should say—! He had been heard by Joyce and the clerk to express his hatred of the old man and his willingness to kill him. In addition there were the notes, overdue and about to be protested, which Flaggs had found in his study within twelve hours of Lord

Russell's murder. Motive enough for any crime. Moreover, the policeman had seen him loitering there at almost the exact moment of the homicide!

These momentous facts came crashing down upon his brain with the weight of stones, numbing for an instant his exquisite torture—then reason reasserted herself. Lord Russell was dead. If circumstances seemed to point in his direction, he had only to deny that the notes had been in his possession, and certainly his word would be taken as against that of the drunken clerk of a solicitor. Moreover, the notes were obviously not in the possession of the executors. Should, by any chance, no memoranda of them remain he might never be called upon to honor them. At all events, his bankruptcy had, for the time at least, been averted. Even were their existence known, legal procedure would intervene to give him time to evolve some means of escape—perhaps, in default of aught else, a marriage of convenience. Sir Richard, in spite of the burning pain in his right arm, leaned back his head with a sensation of relief.

A soft knock came at the door and he heard the nurse's voice murmuring in low tones; then the curtain was partially raised and he recognized the figures of Sir Penniston Crisp and his young assistant.

"Ah, my dear Mortmain! When you left me yesterday morning I hardly expected to see you so soon again. And how do you find yourself?" was the baronet's cheery salutation.

Sir Richard smiled faintly.

"Rather a nasty wound," continued the surgeon. "Fickles, hand me those bandage scissors. Well, we must take a look at it." And he seated himself comfortably by the bedside.

Miss Fickles, who had elevated Sir Richard to a sitting posture, now handed Sir Penniston the scissors, and the great physician leisurely cut the bandage from the arm. Mortmain winced with pain and closed his eyes. For an instant the outer air soothed the burning palm and forearm, then the blood crept into the veins and the pain became veritable agony.

"Hm!" remarked Sir Penniston. "I must open this up. It needs attending to."

He might well say so, for the edges of the wound showed tinges of yellow, and the hand itself was torn pitifully.

"Scalscope, pass those instruments to Miss Fickles, and open that bottle of somni-chloride. I shall have to give you a whiff of anæsthetic, Mortmain. These little exploring expeditions are apt to be painful, however gentle we try to be. Just enough to make you a mere spectator—you will not lose consciousness. Wonderful, isn't it? I'm afraid I shall have to pick out some slivers of bone and trim off the edges a little. It will only take a moment or two. Then a nice bandage and you will be quite at ease."

While Jermyn was emptying Sir Penniston's bag of its heterogeneous contents, Miss Fickles boiled the surgeon's implements in a tray of water over a tiny electric stove, and then arranged them in order upon a soft bed of padded cotton. Scalscope pulled a table to the bedside, and laid out with military precision rolls of linen, absorbents, antiseptic gauze, scissors, tape, thread, needles, and finally the little bottle of somni-chloride. The nurse lowered Sir Richard back upon the pillow and quickly twisted a fresh towel into a cone.

"How science leaps onward," continued Sir Pennis-

ton, meditatively taking the cone in his left hand. "Anodyne, ether, chloroform, nitrous oxide, ethyl-chloride, and at last the greatest of all boons, somni-chloride! And all within my lifetime—that is really the most extraordinary part of it. Ah, what are the miracles of art to the miracles of science? Think of being able at last, as you heard me announce, to feel sure of never permanently losing a limb!"

He allowed a single drop from the bottle to fall into the cone. Even as it descended it resolved itself into a lilac-colored volatile filling the cone like a horn of plenty. Sir Penniston held it with a smile just over Mortmain's head and suffered it to escape gently downward. At the first faint odor the baronet felt a perfect calm steal over his tired brain, at the second he seemed translated from his body and hovering above it, retaining the while an almost supernatural acuteness of eye and ear. Of bodily pain he felt nothing. Then Crisp inverted the cone and poured out the lilac smoke in a faint iridescent cloud, which eddied round the baronet's head and filled his nostrils with the sweet fragrance of an old-fashioned garden. Its perfume almost smothered him, and for a moment his eyes were blurred as if he had inhaled a breath of strong ammonia. Then his sight cleared and he no longer smelled the flowers. The surgeon laid down the cone and took up a small, thin knife.

"Fickles, hold the wrist; you, Scalscope, the fingers. Thank you, that will do nicely."

Mortmain watched with fascinated interest as Sir Penniston applied the point to his palm. Then the surgeon suddenly raised his head and looked pityingly at Sir Richard. At the same moment the effect of the somni-chloride began to wear off and the baronet felt a

throbbing in his hand. Jermyn also cast a glance of compassion at the patient, while Miss Fickles turned away her head as if unable to bear the sight of his suffering.

"My poor Mortmain," said the surgeon. "I fear you can never use this hand again."

Mortmain caught his breath and choked.

"What do you mean?" he gasped, and the effort sent a sharp pain through his lungs. "Not use my hand again?" His words sounded like the roar of a waterfall.

"I fear you cannot. It is an ugly-looking wound. I am sorry to say you will have to lose your hand. We shall be lucky if we can save the arm."

Mortmain felt an extraordinary pity for himself. He sobbed aloud. He had been vaguely aware that certain unfortunate persons in lowly circumstances occasionally lost their limbs. He was accustomed to contribute handsomely toward the homes for cripples and the blind, but he had never associated such an affliction with himself. He could not appreciate the proximity of it. There must be a mistake—or an alternative.

"No, no, no!" he exclaimed heavily. "Surely, you can restore my hand by treatment. I do not care how painful or tedious it may be. Why, I *must* have my hand. I have it now. Leave it as it is. I shall recover in time."

Sir Penniston smiled cheerfully.

"I am sorry," he repeated, and Mortmain fancied that he detected a gleam of exultation in his eye. "Nothing can save it. Gangrene has already set in. The verdigris of the vase has poisoned the flesh. Do you think I would trifle with you? That is not my business. Be a man. It is hard; true enough. But it might be much worse."

"But my music!" cried Mortmain in agony. "I shall be a miserable cripple! A fellow with an empty sleeve or a stuffed hand in a glove! Horrible!" He groaned.

"You have still another," remarked the surgeon calmly. "Bind up this arm," he ordered, turning sharply to Jermyn. "Mortmain, I shall have to amputate your hand at the wrist within twelve hours. Do you desire a consultation? I assure you any physician would unhesitatingly give the same opinion. Still, if you desire——"

The room swam about the baronet, and for an instant the two surgeons seemed like two ogres hovering aloft with bloodthirsty faces glowering down at his helpless body.

Scalscope finished the bandage and tied the ends. Then he looked across at Crisp and remarked:

"How fortunate, Sir Penniston, that your experiments have been concluded in time to save Sir Richard. He will be the very first to benefit by your great discovery!"

Crisp smiled responsively.

"What is that?" cried Mortmain. "Save me? What do you mean?"

"Merely this, Mortmain. That if you are willing I may still give you a hand in place of this ruined one. It is possible, as I announced yesterday, to graft another in its place."

Mortmain stared stupidly at Sir Penniston. A great weight seemed stifling him.

"Did you really *mean* it?" he gasped.

"Precisely," returned the surgeon. "It will be difficult, but not particularly dangerous."

"Another's hand!" groaned the baronet.

"And why not?" eagerly continued the surgeon. "Surely some one will be found who can be induced for a proper consideration to assist in an operation that will restore to usefulness so distinguished a member of society."

"But is it *right*?" gasped Mortmain. "Is it lawful to maim a fellow-creature merely to serve oneself?" The idea disgusted him.

"As you please," remarked Crisp dryly. "If you are to avail yourself of this opportunity, which has never been offered to another, you must say so at once. If you are indifferent to the loss of your hand or distrust my skill, there is nothing left but to amputate and be done with it."

"It cannot be right!" moaned Mortmain. "I know it is a wicked thing."

"Right?" sneered Crisp. "Why, I almost believe that it would be a sin if I let this opportunity go by."

"What is that?" cried Miss Fickles sharply.

There was a sharp knock at the door and Ashley Flynt entered, with a strange look on his face. Like a flash it occurred to Mortmain that the solicitor had called to see him about the bankruptcy. He looked again, and a terrible thought possessed him that it was for something else that the lawyer had come. Was it about the murder? Was he already suspected? Apprehension dwarfed the horror of Sir Penniston's suggestion.

"Ah, Flynt," said the surgeon, "I am glad you have come. You can advise our friend here. I have offered to give him a new hand in place of the one which he must lose. He's afraid that it is unlawful. Come, give us an opinion!"

Flynt sank silently into an armchair and rested his finger tips lightly together.

"Flynt," cried Mortmain, "what a terrible thing it is to deprive a fellow-creature of a limb. Is it legal? Is it not criminal?"

Flynt gazed fixedly at Sir Richard for a moment without replying.

"Situations sometimes arise," he remarked in a toneless voice, "where the results desired, even if they do not justify the means employed, at least render legal opinions superfluous."

"I do not understand you," groaned Mortmain. "Do you mean that what Sir Penniston proposes is a crime?"

"I mean that in a transaction of such moment the purely legal aspect of the case may be of slight importance."

"Exactly!" exclaimed Sir Penniston, whose face had assumed an expression of uneasiness. "To be sure! How plain he puts things, Mortmain. The law does not concern us when the integrity of the human body is involved."

"But if I require and insist upon your advice?" continued Mortmain. "You know that you are my solicitor."

"In a matter of this kind I should refuse to give an opinion in a specific case touching the interest of a client," returned Flynt.

"I must know the law!" cried the baronet.

"Very well," replied Flynt. "I have examined the statutes and find that the maiming of another (save where such maiming is necessary to preserve his life or health), even with his consent, is a felony. That is the law, if you must have it."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Crisp. "There are so many laws that one can't help violating some of them every day. What an absurd statute! It only shows how ignorant our legislators used to be! I am sure there were no scientific men in Parliament. It is nonsensical."

Flynt gave a short laugh and arose.

"My dear Sir Richard," he remarked dryly, "this is entirely a matter for your own conscience and that of your physician. I trust that you will soon recover. I have an important engagement. I must beg you to excuse me."

"Gad, sir," cried Crisp, making a wry face toward the door as it closed behind the solicitor, "what a fellow that is! You might as well try to wring juice out of a paving stone. I feel quite irritated by him."

"If I consent," said Mortmain, "do you think you can find a proper person to—to——"

"My dear Mortmain," responded Sir Penniston eagerly, "leave that to us. You may be sure that we shall accept no hand that is not perfect in every way and adapted to your particular needs. You need give yourself not the slightest uneasiness upon that score, I assure you. Of course, you will have to pay for it, but I am convinced that in an affair of this kind a satisfactory adjustment can easily be made—say, two hundred pounds down and an annuity of fifty pounds. How does that strike you? Why, it would be a godsend to many a poor fellow—say a clerk. He earns a beggarly five pounds a month. You give him two hundred pounds and as much a year for doing nothing as he was earning working ten hours a day."

The pains in Mortmain's hand had begun again with renewed intensity and his whole arm throbbed in re-

sponse. He felt excited and feverish, and his thoughts no longer came with the same clearness and consecutiveness as before. It was evident to him that Crisp's diagnosis was correct. But shocking as was the realization that he, who had been in the prime of health but a few hours before, must now undergo a major operation, it was as nothing compared with the moral difficulty in which he found himself. All his inherited tendencies drew him back from a violation of the law, particularly a violation which included the maiming of a fellow-being; and so, for that matter, did all his acquired tastes and characteristics. On the other hand, his confidence in Crisp's skill and knowledge was such that he never for an instant doubted his ability successfully to achieve that which he had proposed.

"But the law! The law!" cried Mortmain in a last and almost pathetic effort to oppose that which he now in reality desired. Crisp laughed almost sneeringly.

"What is the law? The law is for the general good, not the individual. Are we to follow it blindly when to do so would be suicidal? Bah! The law never dares transgress the sacred circle of a physician's discretion."

"I suppose that is quite true!" exclaimed Sir Richard faintly. "I leave it to you. Do as you think best. I will follow your instructions. But I am suffering. My hand tortures me horribly. Let us have it over with as soon as possible. How soon can you make your arrangements?"

"By this afternoon, Sir Richard."

Mortmain sank back. In his eagerness he had half raised himself from the pillow, and now a sensation of nausea accompanied by dizziness took possession of him. He saw things dimly and in distorted forms. There was

a strange roaring in his head as of a multitude of waters and he perceived that Crisp and Jermyn were talking eagerly together. He caught disconnected words muttered hurriedly in low tones. They moved slowly toward the door and he distinctly heard Crisp say as they passed out:

"Yes, Flaggs is the very man!"

The words filled him with a nameless terror.

"Stop!" he cried, "stop! I will have nothing to do with that man—do you hear? Stop! Come back!" But the door closed, and Mortmain, helpless and trembling, again fell back and shut his eyes.

IV

It was cold in the train—icy cold, and in spite of his fur coat Sir Richard found himself shivering. Only his arm hanging in a splint burned with the fires of hell, as if imps with red-hot pincers were slowly tearing apart the nerves. Sir Penniston, sitting opposite, smiled encouragingly at him.

There were several people in the carriage. The lamps had been lighted and in the corner, beside a large black case, sat Jermyn. Next to him came Joyce, looking exceedingly respectable and very solemn. But the other three he did not remember to have seen before—that tall, white-whiskered man in the otter collar: he probably had been presented and Sir Richard had forgotten. Then there was a big, broad-shouldered fellow in a soft cap, and next to him a slender, white-faced youth whose chin was buried in the depths of his coat collar, and whose hands were thrust deep into his pockets. The big man looked out the window occasionally and inquired the time, but the youth beside him kept his eyes fast shut and hardly moved. Had he not been sitting bolt upright Sir Richard fancied that the latter might have been taken for a corpse.

"Woxton next stop, gentlemen!" announced the guard, opening the door for an instant as the train paused at a way station. A cold blast of air followed and Mortmain's teeth chattered. It was quite dark in the com-

partment and he felt very weak and miserable. He could not remember getting aboard the train, but the purport of it all was unmistakable. The agonies of the morning rushed back across his memory, and his hand throbbed and twisted within the splint. He felt sick and faint and the atmosphere of the carriage seemed suffocating.

"How much farther is it?" inquired the man in the otter collar. "We've been traveling for hours!"

"Only eight miles," answered Crisp cheerfully. "It certainly has seemed an unearthly distance."

There was a long silence punctuated only by the puffing of the engine and the shriek of the whistle. Suddenly the pale young man whimpered. The sound sent a chill to the marrow of Sir Richard's spine.

"If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee—" whispered the youth. Then he fell to sobbing in the depths of his collar, but without opening his eyes.

"Come, come, my man! None of that!" cried Crisp angrily. "You're a lucky fellow! Why, your fortune is as good as made."

Mortmain shuddered.

"If thy hand offend thee—" he repeated to himself. "If thy hand offend——"

Then he became conscious of still another presence somewhere—a presence that watched him furtively, but hungrily, with eager, greedy eyes. He stared along the seats and into the crannies. Could it have been a face at the window? No, the black night rushed by steadily and blankly. And yet he could not convince himself that another face had not been there a moment before.

The train slowed up with a screeching of the brakes and came to a stop. The door was flung open; his com-

panions hurriedly arose, and the broad-shouldered young man placed his arm protectingly about the baronet and assisted him to the platform. A fine snow was sifting down silently over the lamplit road and upon two large depot wagons standing beside the station. Again Mortmain was conscious of a presence. He glanced quickly across the platform and thought he saw a shadow spring from a rear carriage and leap into the darkness of the bushes.

"What was that?" he gasped.

But the others paid no attention, being busily engaged in deporting their cases and portmanteaus. The train started on again. Only the station agent was left, his lantern making an opaque circle in the intense darkness of the snow-filled night.

The horses champed impatiently, and as quickly as was possible the party divided and climbed into the wagons, Crisp, the nurse, and Mortmain entering the last. The doors were slammed to and they started. Still Mortmain felt convinced that they were not alone. Looking back just as they were leaving the dim lights of the station, he could have sworn that he saw the figure of a man running steadily along behind, crouching low against the road. To the south a distant glow bespoke the presence of a village, but the wagons swung sharply to the north and plunged into a wood.

A drowsiness had come over the baronet and he pressed close to the nurse, terrified and shaken by the dread of some approaching peril. This hired man seemed nearer to him than any other living soul. He cried softly, fearing to be observed, and the tears coursed down his hot cheeks and lost themselves in his furs. Now and then he would listen intently for the sound of some one

running, but he could hear nothing save the crunch of the wheels and the jingle of the harness. Yet he knew that just behind them, clinging to their wheel, was pressing that mysterious figure that had leaped into the darkness beside the station.

After what seemed an hour, a bend in the road disclosed a single light not far ahead and in a few moments the wagons stopped before a high wall. The party got out and Crisp opened the gate. Mortmain stared fixedly down the road, waiting for the unbidden guest to creep swiftly into view.

"Here we are!" cried Sir Penniston. "Wait a moment until I notify the farmer."

As the surgeon hastened up the paved walk to the cottage, the wagons turned and started back at a brisk trot, like a home-going funeral procession. All the windows were dark and Mortmain clung sobbing to the nurse's arm.

"Hit's all right, sir," whispered the latter sympathetically. "Hit's all right!"

Slowly the party made their way to the porch. A light appeared in the lower windows, then the door was opened. The nurse, half carrying the baronet, helped him into the hall and seated him upon a wooden chair. As the door closed Mortmain saw a shadow at the gate.

"Look! Look!" he cried. The warm air swallowed him up; he felt a rush of blood to his neck and face; the figures about him swayed and swam in the dim light; there was a stabbing pain in his hand and he knew no more.

V

WHEN Mortmain was able to reappear in society he was astonished to find that the murder of Lord Russell was no longer a matter of interest or of discussion. The temporarily shocked and horrified community had apparently within a short time placidly accepted it, and apart from occasional references in the newspapers, it was rapidly becoming a mere matter of history, taking its proper chronological place in the long list of London's unsolved mysteries. It had been given out at the time that the horrible death of his old friend had so prostrated the baronet that he had been threatened with total collapse, and had only been restored to health by remaining in bed under the constant care of a certain distinguished physician. At times Mortmain was almost inclined to believe this himself, for the ghastly night at the lonely farmhouse, his ensuing illness and slow recovery, seemed, in the full swing of the London season and contrasted with the brilliant colors of its festivities, less actuality than a dreadful nightmare which continually obtruded itself upon his recollection. He had resumed his place in fashionable life with his old assurance, picking up his cards where he had left them lying face downward upon the table. Within a week he was again "among those present" at every gathering of note, and he had dropped hints of his intention to give a new and unique musical entertainment which was to surpass any-

thing of the kind theretofore attempted. He had also resumed his attentions to Lady Bella Forsythe with a definite purpose—that of rendering himself financially impregnable.

But Sir Richard was not the same. His glass showed him to be paler than of yore, his eyes more deeply sunken, his hair touched at the edges with a ghost of white, the lines of his mouth more firmly marked. His friends jokingly told him that he was growing old. He had paid a heavy price for what he had bought, yet it was not loss of vitality, not physical shock alone that had thus aged him, but a ghastly, damning fact that never left him for an instant, waking or sleeping: *the fact that the man had died.* They had not told him at first—it might have affected his cure. The result upon his spiritual being when he learned of it had been no less disastrous. *The man had died.* There was no longer any pensioner to claim his annuity; no creditor even to demand the price of his awful bargain; no witness to testify to its hideous terms —he had fled the jurisdiction of all earthly courts. Sir Richard was free. But the thought of that life forfeited to his own egotism was a millstone about his neck, bowing him forever to the ground.

He intentionally talked frankly of Lord Russell. The old man had been highly respected and, indeed, moderately prominent in philanthropic circles. Mortmain had made a point of going personally to see the bas-relief erected to his memory. He learned that the next of kin was a Devon man who never came up to town, and that the executors had taken possession almost immediately and disposed of the house to an American millionaire, who was even now remodeling the historic mansion, inserting Grecian columns and putting on a Château de

Nevers roof. Of course he inspected this with friends, was properly disgusted, and seized the opportunity to gratify his curiously morbid hunger for the details of the murder. He learned that, though few of the facts were known to the public, opinion had crystallized into a settled acceptance that the murderer had made good his escape and that the identity of the murderer was known. In fact, the silence of Scotland Yard was rendered nugatory by the reward of £1,000 offered by the County Council for the apprehension of Saunders Leach, the recently discharged secretary of the philanthropist. Nothing had been heard of him since Lord Russell's butler had admitted him to the house, an hour or two before the murder, upon his representation that he had come to look over some papers at the request of his erstwhile master. The butler, a most respectable person, had introduced him into the library, where Lord Russell was, and departed. He had recalled afterwards—it had come out at the hearing at the Central Criminal Court—that he had heard the sound of voices raised at a high pitch, but, as his master was at times somewhat querulous, this had not particularly attracted his attention. An hour later, when he had brought the evening papers, he had discovered the aged man lying face downward upon his desk, and a window, bearing the bloody traces of the assassin, open to the night. And Leach had vanished—as if he had never lived.

The thing most puzzling to Sir Richard, as to everybody else, was the failure of any apparent motive for so ghastly a deed. Leach, according to old Floyd the butler, had been a very decent sort of fellow, rather sickly Floyd took him to be, without any particular faults or virtues. It seemed to outrage reason to suppose that

an anæmic little clerk could have murdered a helpless old man simply out of revenge for having lost his place. And then nothing had been stolen—that is, nobody but Sir Richard knew that anything had been stolen. Yet the public and the London County Council pronounced unhesitatingly as established fact that Saunders Leach was the assassin, and that he should be hunted down to the very ends of the world and, if need be, followed into the next. Only Scotland Yard remained silent after annexing the contents of the room, the windows, the carpet, and even portions of the faded paper from the very walls themselves. Then Parliament went into a convulsion over a proposed excise alteration and London forgot the murder of Lord Russell in its feverish interest in the expected legislative abortion. There was an appeal to the country; a premier retired to Italy; some few thousands were added to the credit column of the national ledger at the expense of a ministry, and once more the advent of royalty at St. James's dazzled the cockney eye and filled the cockney mouth to the stultification of the cockney brain. Lord Russell was forgotten—as completely as Saunders Leach—as totally as an isle sunk beneath the waters of oblivion.

The first time Sir Richard had essayed to write he had been deliciously horrified at the ease with which his pencil had followed the pressure of his new fingers. His recent clothes added an extra inch to his sleeves, and his broad cuffs fully concealed the white seam that ran around his wrist. The hand itself served his purposes well enough, but unmistakably it was not his own. He never laid the two together—never let his eyes fall upon the vicarious fingers if he could avoid it, for inevitably a sickening sensation of repulsion followed. His own

fingers were long and tapering, the nails fine with pronounced "crowns," the back of the hand slender and smooth; the new one was broader and hairy, the fingers shorter and square at the ends, the nails thick and dull with no "crowns," and the veins blue and prominent. There were too many pores!

He loathed the thing, tell himself as often as he would that it was nothing but a mechanical device to supplement Nature. Physically he felt as if he were wearing a glove that was too small for him, into which he had been forced to stuff his hand. This seemed to produce a tight, swollen sensation which was the only indication of his abnormal condition. He ate, drove, used his keys, articulated his fingers, and even wrote with the same muscular freedom as before. His chirography actually and undeniably exhibited the same general characteristics, only intensified and with less certainty of stroke and pen-pressure. The letters which had previously been merely somewhat original in structure as suited a man of fashion, now became humpbacked and deformed. It was as though the spiritual qualities of Sir Richard's penmanship had shrunk away, leaving only the grotesque residue of a dwarfed and evil nature.

But apart from the question of chirography one other manifestation constantly reminded Mortmain of his crime. This was an itching in the grafted hand whenever its possessor became angry or excited. Even hard physical exercise produced the same phenomenon. It seemed as if Nature, having provided for the circulation of a certain amount of blood, found on reaching this particular extremity that the supply exceeded the power of reception. If angered, he found himself indulging in ungovernable fits of passion, with his eyes suffused and

his head buzzing. At times he experienced an almost irresistible impulse to throttle somebody. On the slightest provocation the fingers of his right hand would curve and clutch, and a fierce longing seize him to compass the extinction of life in some animate being—to feel the slackening of the muscles in some victim—an emotion elemental, barbarous, cruel, but keen, masterful and pervading. He had an exhilarating sensation of strength and vitality new to him. Moreover, his attitude toward his fellow-men had imperceptibly altered. Before his operation he had hated all evil doers and been strongly loyal to government and law; now he sympathized with the lawbreakers. In defying society and deliberately violating its statutes, he had allied himself with its enemies.

This he realized and accepted. At any moment he might be called upon to face a criminal prosecution for the felony of mutilation; and there was still the peculiar and inexplicable silence of Flaggs in regard to the papers which he had taken away with him on the morning after the murder. No word had ever passed between them on the subject, and yet the notes were outstanding and in the hands of a more dangerous holder than even Lord Russell himself. By merely handing them to the executors, Flaggs could not only throw Sir Richard into bankruptcy, but could place him in the awkward position of having suppressed the notes at the time of Lord Russell's death. That, too, would lead to a still further and more delicate complication. He would naturally be asked how he had secured possession of the notes. It would be clear that they were in Lord Russell's hands at the time of the murder. Flaggs would explain that *he* had procured them from Sir Richard. So far as *he* was concerned, he had been safely "jugged" at the time of the murder.

He could call a score of sergeants, matrons, and bobbies to prove that, and establish it by the police records themselves. Where, then, people would want to know, had Sir Richard obtained them? It would be a hard question to answer in such a way that the answer would carry any sort of conviction with it.

No one, of course, would believe that he had found them, as in fact was the case. Any such explanation would excite instant suspicion. If he should say that he had paid them and had received the notes from Lord Russell's lawyers, inquiry would at once demonstrate that the lawyers had never had possession of the notes, or received any money from Sir Richard. If he said that he had taken the money to Lord Russell and received the notes *from him*, his own evidence would place him upon the scene of the murder at approximately the moment of it. Further, no draft in payment of the notes would be found among Lord Russell's papers, and the suspicion would immediately arise that he had proffered a forged draft to secure possession of the notes, and then murdered the old man to get it back.

It was indeed a predicament of the worst sort. In Sir Richard the horrible unfairness of it bred a hatred for a society in which such things were possible. He looked at any moment to find himself made the defendant in a criminal prosecution, just or unjust—the unjust the more difficult of the two to escape. He needed money—money to fight with, money to live on, money to keep up his hollow pretense of respectability. And as his attitude toward society gradually changed, the dead-alive thing at his wrist with the white seam throbbed and itched until Mortmain longed fiercely to tear it off. At night he would dream—and this dream repeated itself over and

over again—that he was fastened to some miserable convict, shackled by the wrist in such a way that somehow they two had grown together, and as he struggled in his sleep his fellow would turn into the grinning, jeering image of Flaggs—Flaggs fastened to him by a bond of burning, itching flesh—Flaggs joined to him like a Siamese twin, flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood—until by some unnatural evolution *he* became Flaggs and could see his own wretched shape writhing at the other end of their mutual arm. Then shaking, chilled, and covered with perspiration he would awake and look for Flaggs beside him, and hold his hand to the blue night-light only to find the seam about his wrist and the dead-white hand throbbing until he thought he should go mad.

By day he was haunted by the vision of Flaggs watching his house and following him along the streets. He could not get the fellow out of his mind. This terror of the drunken clerk became a positive obsession. As he walked the streets or drove in his brougham through the park he was constantly planning out what he should say when they should finally come together—when Flaggs should call for him, summon him as his own. Could he defy him? Could he palliate him? The hand twitched at the thought of it. He fancied that Flaggs followed him everywhere in various disguises, running swiftly behind, dodging into doorways and up side streets when he turned around. And this habit of turning around and glancing furtively up and down grew on Sir Richard, and with it grew the itching in his hand, until he suspected that people shook their heads and said that his illness had undermined his health more than they had supposed.

It was no bodily illness that thus affected Sir Rich-

ard, but spiritual degeneration. He went from dinner party to dinner party and from musicale to musicale, paying court to Lady Bella Forsythe as if no grotesque face were peering from behind the arras of his brain. Yet in reality he was preparing to meet Flaggs in the final struggle for supremacy. Flaggs, like death and the tax man, was coming—*when*? He could not tell, but inevitably. And he must be ready, armed *cap-a-pie* to meet him on every ground. He had at last resolved to marry Lady Bella. It was an essential in his campaign to defeat Flaggs. There must be plenty of money—money, that was what he needed, what he wanted. It was partly for Lady Bella that he had planned his musical entertainment, for, in addition to its practical desirability, if he purposed to retain his position in the social world, it would afford an excellent opportunity for presenting himself to her as a person worthy of her own high station and acquaintance. His own music—! Alas! the brain was willing, but the fingers were powerless. Where before he had produced the most delicate of harmonies there now resulted nothing but harsh discords. The hand would not stretch an octave!

The Milbank Street house blazed into the early evening with a thousand lights. All day long wagons of roses and asters had stood before the doors, and aproned men had staggered into the hall with pots of flowers and stands of palms. Confectioners' wagons, loads of camp chairs, and now a large awning were the indubitable evidences of what was afoot. Night came on. The white cloth on the carpet across the sidewalk was trampled to a dirty gray. The orchestra began to arrive, and, shedding their coats in the servants' entrance, toiled up the back stairs and tentatively made their way through the

flower-banked halls to the conservatory. Sir Richard sitting in his den and awaiting the arrival of his first guests could hear the musicians tuning their basses and testing the wood winds. But there was no music in Sir Richard's soul. All day long he had been haunted by the ghost of Flaggs scuttling behind him, and his hand had seemed swollen and discolored. Well, if he could but get through the night, could succeed in his suit with Lady Bella, he would go away and rest. Perhaps he would leave London forever—Lady Bella was very fond of Rome. The sounds of the instruments grew more confused and louder, the violins mingling with the others. Occasionally the trombones would boom out and the kettles rumble ominously. Outside splashes of rain began to fall against the windows, and the wind, catching in the hollow column of the awning, swept into the halls and through the open door into the den. Mortmain looked at his watch and found it was ten o'clock. People would be arriving soon. His hand twitched and he lighted a cigarette. There was a great deal of traffic in the front hall—too much. He closed the door and poured out a thimbleful of brandy. Well, a day or two and he would be rid of Flaggs forever! Then he heard a low knock. He tried to cheat himself into the belief that it was Joyce.

"Come in," he cried, but his voice was husky.

Flaggs stood before him.

"I have been expecting you," said Mortmain. It did not seem strange that he should make this declaration.

"Yes?" queried Flaggs.

"What do you want?" demanded the baronet.

"Ten thousand pounds," answered the clerk. "Tomorrow."

Mortmain broke into a harsh laugh.

"Ha! my good fellow! What do you think I am—a Crœsus? Come, come, I'll give you fifty—and I get the notes, eh?"

"Ten thousand pounds," repeated Flaggs stubbornly, "by to-morrow noon, or I hand you over to the police."

The blood jumped into Sir Richard's face and his dexter hand throbbed and tingled.

"You miserable rascal!" he cried. "You wretched blackmailer! How dare you come into my house? Do you know that I could *kill* you? And no one would ever be the wiser! Take a few pounds and be off with you or I'll summon the police myself."

"Not so fast, not so fast, Sir Richard," muttered Flaggs. "I don't think you'll call the police."

The look on the white scowling face before him told Sir Richard that the fellow meant to do his business. A haunting fear seized hold upon him like that which he had experienced in the depot wagon—a feeling that behind this grotesque, dwarfed figure of a man lurked the hand of Fate.

"That's right. Be reasonable," said Flaggs soothingly. "Some folks would think ten thousand pounds was cheap to escape the gallows," he added in lower tones.

"Gallows!" cried Sir Richard, his anger rising. He knew the fellow's game now. He was being lied to. Flaggs was trying to frighten, to bully him. "The gallows, my friend, ceased to be the punishment for felony in 1826—even for blackmail!"

"But not for murder," retorted Flaggs with a ghastly smile. "Not for murder!"

"Enough of this!" exclaimed Sir Richard, but his knees were trembling. "Here are a hundred pounds. Go!" He put his hand to his breast pocket.

Flaggs laughed.

"Look!" he cried, pulling from the lining of his hat a printed slip which he unfolded and handed to the baronet.

Mortmain took it in dread and held it to the light.

"*Murder in the first degree defined.*

"*The taking of the life of a human being by another with malice prepense or in the commission of a felony.*"

The last six words were underlined in red ink.

"Well?" he asked, but the word stuck in his throat.

"Well?" returned the other. "It's plain enough, isn't it? What more do you want?"

"It is not plain, you blackguard."

"Maiming is a felony. You know that. Amputation is maiming. Flynt told you so. The fellow that sold you that hand of yours died of it, didn't he?"

Mortmain uttered an exclamation of horror. He looked down at the fearful thing and it seemed to him to be the color of death. "They can never prove it!" he cried faintly. "They can't prove it! They cannot!"

"Yes, they can! I saw it done," remarked Flaggs. "I saw him buried in the garden. He is there yet—minus his hand."

"You villain!" gasped Mortmain. The room reeled, and Flaggs danced before him, gibbering with glee. The light darkened and brightened again and seemed to swing in circles.

"Pull yourself together, Sir Richard!" remarked Flaggs mockingly. "Pull yourself together! Isn't it worth ten thousand pounds or one hundred thousand pounds? But I'm reasonable. Only ten thousand pounds! Come, come! Let me have it!"

"*No!*" shouted Mortmain. "Not if I die for it."

"Then you *will* die for it," said Flaggs.

The sound of the fiddles came through the closed door of the study. The cries of the lackeys and the roll of carriages arriving and departing could be heard in the front.

"You will die for it, as there is a God in heaven, if I choose!"

Mortmain stood silent. He had a presentiment of what Flaggs was going to say.

"A word from me," continued the clerk, "and you hang for the *murder of Lord Russell.* Everyone knows you hated him. Flynt, Joyce, and I heard you say you would kill him. You owed him seventy-five thousand pounds and it was two days overdue. He would have ruined you next day. The officer saw you outside his window within five minutes of the murder, and so did I. There was nothing taken but the notes—nothing. They were found in your possession the next morning. How did they get there? The case is complete. The notes convict you. I've got them. They are yours for ten thousand pounds—only ten thousand pounds."

"You villain," shouted Mortmain, springing toward him.

The door from the hall opened and Joyce entered letting in the warm breath of roses and the loud strains of a waltz.

"Lady Bella has arrived, Sir Richard," he announced.

"Tell her I am coming," said Mortmain, starting for the door.

"Wait!" shrieked Flaggs, his face horribly distorted. "Wait!" Joyce had retired.

Mortmain paused with clinched fists.

"Isn't it worth ten thousand pounds to save a guilty man—a man who can't escape?"

"Why, you fool!" cried Mortmain, suddenly regaining his self-control. "Such evidence is valueless. My word is worth *yours* ten times over, and I deny that you found the notes in my house. I say that *you* are the murderer. And I believe you are!"

"Not so fast! Not so fast!" leered Flaggs. "You know I was 'in quod' at the time. Don't forget that! And there's one more bit of evidence that nails you. You can't escape. You're done. I've got you—*the murderer's thumb marks on the glass!*"

"The devil take you!" yelled Mortmain, the blood suffusing his eyes.

"The devil has *you* already!" retorted Flaggs. "He's part of you. You *are* the devil. Whose hand *is* that? Tell me that! *Whose hand is that?*"

Mortmain turned an agonized face toward his tormentor. His spirit was gone. He was ready to fall upon his knees, but he could not move. He raised his left hand pitifully as if to shield himself from the coming blow, and yet his parched lips uttered the soundless word:

"Whose?"

Flaggs gave a dry laugh.

"It belonged to Saunders Leach!"

With a sickening of the heart the baronet realized for the first time the terrible alternative which confronted him.

His selfish willingness to violate the law and mutilate a fellow human being merely to gratify his own vanity had plunged him into an abyss from which there seemed no escape. "Murder in the first degree defined: the taking of the life of a human being by another with malice

prepense *or in the commission of a felony.*" By a cruel yet extraordinary chance he, the needless yet deliberate lawbreaker, had purchased the very hand which had slain his enemy—from the murderer himself, who was only too anxious to get rid of it. By an equally hideous but astonishing coincidence this devil's contract had proved in fact the death warrant of the murderer, and Mortmain had been his involuntary executioner. Saunders Leach had paid the penalty of his crime, but Mortmain carried dangling at the end of his dexter forearm the living evidence that he, and not Leach, was the assassin. The coil of the rope of fate, at one end of which hung the limp body of the common criminal, had fallen upon the neck of his aristocrat brother, and it needed but a word from Flaggs to send him spinning from the gallows. Should he seek to show that the finger prints upon the window of Lord Russell's library were not his own, and by this means to creep from beneath the meshes of the net of circumstantial evidence in which he was entangled, he would, in the same breath, be forced to confess that he was guilty of the murder of Saunders Leach—murder, as the result of the latter's mutilation—murder under the literal interpretation of the statute. Was ever rat so nicely trapped? The horror of the thing turned Mortmain into a madman. He sprang at the clerk in a delirium of rage, his right hand clutched Flaggs tightly by the throat, and its blunt fingers twisted into the flesh deeper and deeper. It was done so quickly that the clerk was unable to escape. His eyes started forward, his tongue protruded, and his mouth frothed as he made ineffectual attempts to break the baronet's hold.

"You've got me, eh?" muttered Mortmain, gritting his teeth. "I think not, Mr. Flaggs!"

The door opened and Joyce entered in much agitation. The orchestra had burst into a triumphant march and the sounds of many footsteps echoed in the hall outside.

"Everybody is arrivin', Sir Richard!" exclaimed the butler, "an' Lady Bella has gone into the music room. His Grace of Belvoir was just askin' for you. Here are two gentlemen who wish to see you important, sir." He held the door open and two men in Inverness coats entered and stood irresolutely near the door.

Mortmain released his grasp upon the neck of Flaggs, who lurched toward the corner and fell motionless behind a table.

"Sir Richard Mortmain?" inquired the taller of the two, a man of massive build and with iron-gray mustache and hair.

"The same," replied Mortmain, his fingers still twitching from the ferocity of his clutch upon the clerk.

The two strangers bowed.

"We have a card to you from Lieutenant Foraker—a friend of yours, I believe. Permit me," and the tall man stepped forward and extended a card to the baronet.

Mortmain mechanically took it between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. It felt like celluloid and a trifle slippery. But the stranger did not release his own hold upon it.

"Pardon me, I have given you the wrong card," he exclaimed apologetically, and withdrawing the bit of board from Mortmain's fingers he opened a wallet and fumbled with the contents. As he did so he handed the first card to his companion, who stepped into the light of the lamp, and examined it carefully through a small microscope which he drew from his pocket.

"His blunt fingers twisted into the flesh deeper and deeper."

"They are *the same*," remarked the stranger of the microscope to the iron-gray man.

"What is all this?" cried Mortmain in an unnatural voice. His head swam. On the mantel the verdigris-covered dragon's face grinned mockingly at him—it was the face of Flaggs.

"Sir Richard," replied the iron-gray man gravely, "I am Inspector Murtha, of Scotland Yard."

Mortmain started back and his right hand twitched again. Through the silence came the measures of "The Flower Song."

"I regret to say," continued the other, "that it is my most unpleasant duty to arrest you for the murder of Lord Gordon Russell."

At the same instant the veil of Sir Richard's mental temple was rent in twain; out of a blackness so intense that it seemed substantive he saw the two inspectors from Scotland Yard fleeing away and diminishing in size until they seemed but puppets gesturing at the edge of an infinity of white desert; then with equal velocity they were carried forward again, growing bigger and bigger until they loomed like giants in his immediate foreground swinging huge scimitars and waving their arms frantically; the strains of the violins changed to voices shouting so sharply that they pained his ears, and waves of light and cosmic darkness over which scintillated a dazzling aurora followed one another in startling succession, until suddenly his soul, shot out of a tunnel, as it were, landed abruptly in a warm meadow covered with daisies, which dissolved before his eyes into the familiar chamber on Milbank Street. A gray mist floated hissing up through the ceiling, the chairs rocked with a strange rotary swing, and the two inspectors smiled cheerfully at him through

a broad and painful band of London sunshine. He swallowed rapidly, and a horrible faintness seized him which gave place to a queer sort of anger.

"There's—some—mistake!" he stuttered. The chairs anchored themselves and the ceiling assumed its normal tint.

"No mistake at all," replied Sir Penniston Crisp.

The problem was too much for the baronet and he gave it up. The murderer's hand no longer twitched, but it loomed white and loathsome from the bed before him, as if dead already, somehow—part of a—yes—what were those things? Bandages?

Crisp and Jermyn saw a look of agonized bewilderment pass over the baronet's face.

"Did they bring me here from the Old Bailey?" he asked. "Am I out on bail?"

Crisp laughed.

"That's one way of putting it," he remarked. "Yes, you're out on bail, and in another second or two you will be entirely free."

"I'm glad you're going to take that thing off again," said Mortmain. "How could you have done it?"

"It's all right," returned Crisp soothingly.

Then Mortmain suddenly understood. But he waited shrewdly.

"What day is this?" he asked in an innocent manner.

"December 5th," replied Jermyn.

"When did I have that fall; you know—the one that made it necessary for you to amputate?"

"Your accident happened yesterday evening, but there is no necessity for amputation," returned Crisp. "Now, my dear fellow, just lie back, will you?—and

don't ask questions. That somni-chloride is still lingering in your head. I shall have to be going in a minute."

Mortmain obeyed the surgeon's instructions, but he was hard at work thinking the thing out logically. It was clear that there had been no amputation, no arrest, no inspectors from Scotland Yard. That scene with Flaggs, horribly distinct as it still was, had had no actuality. But where did fact end and illusion begin? Had the notes been taken? Had there been a murder? Was he a bankrupt? The different propositions entangled themselves helplessly with one another. At the end of a minute he asked deliberately:

"Miss Fickles, did a man take some papers from my table this morning?"

"Yes, Sir Richard," replied the nurse.

Mortmain's heart sank.

"Er—was—did anything happen to Lord Russell?" he asked the surgeon faintly.

"Yes. But don't talk or think of it, Mortmain. I order you! Do you understand?"

A ripple of perspiration broke out on his forehead and it seemed as if a film had rolled off his vision. Of course, he had taken the chloride just after Miss Fickles had gone downstairs for him, and then Crisp and Jermyn had come. He had felt so miserable! And now he felt so much better! He opened his eyes, the same Sir Richard that had inhaled the anæsthetic so obediently.

"I am quite myself now, Sir Penniston," he asserted quietly. "I want to ask one more question. "Flynt was not here, was he?"

"No, of course not."

"And we have not left the room? No railroad trip, eh?"

"No."

"Thank you," said the baronet. "May I have a cup of coffee?"

What reply this preposterous demand would have invited will never be known, for at that moment a knock came upon the door and Joyce asked if Sir Richard could see Mr. Flynt.

"I *must* see him!" said Mortmain.

"Oh, very well!" laughed Crisp. "You're getting better rapidly."

Flynt entered with a breezy manner which he allowed himself to assume only when something really desirable had definitely occurred.

"Good morning, Sir Penniston! Good morning, Sir Richard!" he remarked without sitting down. "I really had to come in and tell you the good news. The executors have just read Lord Russell's will——"

"Mr. Flynt! Mr. Flynt!" interrupted Sir Penniston.

"Oh, it's all right!" continued Flynt with a laugh. "Better than a tonic. You see, Fowler, the only next of kin, was just sailing for New Guinea, and it had to be done at once. I really did Lord Russell an injustice. May I speak before these gentlemen?"

"Certainly," whispered Mortmain, his eyes fastened feverishly upon the lawyer.

"Well, to put it briefly, he has made you a great gift! Here, read it!" and he handed the baronet a typewritten sheet. Mortmain read it eagerly, although his eyes pained him somewhat:

"To my friend, Sir Richard Mortmain, I devise and bequeath the sum of five thousand pounds, and take it upon

myself to express the earnest hope that he will before long publish his views upon art in such a form that the public at large may have the opportunity to profit by that which hitherto has been the privilege only of the few. I desire, moreover, to express my high personal regard for him and my admiration for his whole-souled devotion to the arts, and I hereby instruct my executors to cancel and destroy all evidences of indebtedness owing to me by said Mortmain and to treat said indebtedness as null, void and of no effect, provided, nevertheless, that within six months of my demise said Mortmain shall assign to the directors of the Corporation of the British Museum all his collections of ceramics, bronzes, china, chronometers, scarabs, including the Howard Collection, his cabinets of gems and cameos, including the famous head of Alexander on an onyx of two strata and the *altissimo relievo* on cornelian—Jupiter Ægiochus—the four paintings by Watteau in his music room, and the paintings by Corot and Whistler from his library. As the said moneys borrowed from me from time to time by said Mortmain were, to my knowledge, principally made use of by him for the purpose of purchasing and enlarging said collections, which have increased in value to no inconsiderable extent by virtue of his care and discrimination since he acquired them, I am prepared to regard said loans to him in effect as gifts impressed with a trust in favor of our National Museum, provided, however, that said Mortmain is willing to accept the same and execute the terms thereof as heretofore set forth within six months; but nothing herein shall be taken to affect the right of said Mortmain to take up and pay off said indebtedness within said time, if he shall see fit to do so, in which case the provisions of this codicil shall

be without any force or effect whatsoever, save that I instruct my executors to receive said moneys and hold the same in trust, however, for such scientific and artistic uses as said Mortmain shall direct, preference being given to the needs of the British Museum along the lines of antique works of art and Egyptology."

As Sir Richard laid down the paper his eyes filled and he turned away his head.

"A good old man!" said Flynt reverently.

"Indeed he was!" assented Crisp.

"I must know one thing," whispered Mortmain after a few moments. "Did you send your clerk here this morning to get some papers?"

"Yes, to be sure. I had almost forgotten—I sent Flaggs after an envelope which I fancied I dropped last evening," answered the lawyer.

"Which *you* had dropped?" asked Mortmain stupidly.

"Why, certainly. I had the papers connected with Lord Russell's loans sent here. Flaggs brought 'em—and I dropped an envelope. I *did* drop it, because Flaggs found it here this morning."

"What was in it?" asked Sir Richard eagerly.

Flynt elevated his brows.

"Why, if you don't mind my speaking of it, there were some old notes of yours which had been renewed at various times. I make a practice of keeping the originals as a matter of precaution."

"Oh!" sighed Mortmain. "*Old* notes?"

"*Old* notes," answered Flynt. "Notes taken up and renewed by others."

"Ah!" sighed Mortmain again. "You *did* drop

them, but not in the study. I found them on the street. They gave me quite a turn."

"Well, we will tear them up now," laughed Flynt.

"Pardon me, sir," said Joyce, opening the door and handing a long box to Miss Fickles; "some roses with Lady Bella Forsythe's compliments, and 'opin' as 'ow you'll soon be all right again, sir."

THE RESCUE OF THEOPHILUS NEWBEGIN

I

THE *Dirigo* was a one-hundred-and-twenty-two foot gunboat, spick and span from the Cavite yard—lithe as a panther, swift as a petrel, gray as the mists off Hi-tai-sha—and she was his very own. The biggest, reddest day in all his twenty-three years of life was when the Admiral's order had come to leave the *Ohio*, where he had acted as a sort of apotheosized messenger boy and general escort to civilians' fat wives, and to proceed at once to Shanghai to assume command of her, provision and await further orders. It had cost him nine dollars and seventy-five cents to cable the joyful news adequately to his mother in Baltimore, and although the family resources were small—his father had died a lieutenant commander the year before—she had cabled back a "good luck and God bless you" to him. He only got as an ensign a paltry one hundred and twenty-eight dollars per month, and out of it came his mess bills and other expenses, but for all that he had enough to go down Nanking road and buy his mother a handsome mandarin cloak—Harry Dupont was going back on leave—and then to invite all the fellows he knew in Shanghai harbor to a jamboree at the club. It was going on at the time this

story opens, boisterously and uproariously as befits the blow-out of a twenty-three-year old ensign who has just received his first command. The older civilians, who were drinking their comfortable "B & S" on the veranda, merely shrugged their shoulders as an impromptu refrain rose louder and louder to the pounding of bottles and the jingle of silverware.

> Here's to the Kid and the *Dirigo*,
> He's off for a cruise on the Hwang-ho!

The officers of the squadron, not wishing to spoil the fun, slipped off to the billiard room or the bridge tables, or strolled back to the bar. Most of them had letters to write for the American mail, which would leave the following morning, and more than one sighed as he glanced toward the upper veranda from below the club house. They knew how many and how long the years would be before any of those boys would be called "captain"—well, let them enjoy themselves! What was the use of croaking? There were compensations—of a sort. Even if one's people *were* all on the other side of the globe or migrating from boarding house to boarding house in a vain endeavor to keep up with the changes in the billets of their husbands and fathers, one was still an officer of Uncle Sam's navy.

So reflected Follansbee, executive officer of the flagship *Ohio*, which had slipped into Woosung, ten miles below Shanghai, just as the sunset gun on the forts was echoing over the closely packed junks along the water front, and while the boy was engrossed to the extent of total oblivion with the club steward over the decoration of his dinner table and the choice between various highly recommended brands of Scotch and Irish. Follansbee

was a good sort, who had already waited thirty-five years to get his battleship and was waiting still, and he had seen Jack Russell, the boy's father, die the year before at Tengchan of a combination of liver and disappointment, all too common among naval officers in the East. Follansbee's own liver was none of the best, but he had cut down on the drink, and, anyhow, his wife was coming out on the *Empress of India* next month. He hoped to God the *Ohio* wouldn't be ordered to Sulu or some place impossible for her to follow him. That boy of Russell's—he liked that boy, he was all to the good; knew his place and kept his mouth shut. Follansbee wasn't going to butt in and spoil his fun. It would do him good to get a little drunk. He remembered when he got *his* first gunboat—thirty years ago. Whew! Follansbee stared up at the veranda, then sighed again and started down the *bund*.

Shanghai harbor was alive with light. The murmur of the city rose and fell on the soft, fragrant air, shockingly penetrated every now and then by the discordant shrieks of swiftly hurrying launches. The *bund* was crowded with coolies, some toiling with heavy loads, others pulling their 'rikishas. Here and there flashed the colored lanterns of pedestrians. Beyond the junks lay many cruisers sweeping the starlit night with their quickly moving searchlights. Then one of these took him bang between the eyes and he stumbled and fell against some one coming up the walk.

"Where the deuce—!" shouted a clear young voice angrily. Then the note changed. "I beg pardon, sir—these confounded lights—I didn't see you at all."

Follansbee returned the midshipman's salute.

"Don't mention it!" he growled. "But what are you doing ashore? I thought you had the deck."

"I did, but I'm trying to find Russell. The Admiral wants him. I took the ship's launch to the *Dirigo* and they said there he was ashore and hadn't left any word, only that he'd be back late. Have you seen him?"

"Can't you *hear* him?" inquired Follansbee laconically.

A figure in white duck loomed suddenly into view on the veranda rail waving a bottle and shouting at the top of his lungs:

> "I've got command of the *Dirigo*
> An' I'm off for a cruise on the Hwang-ho!"

followed by a tremendous chorus accompanied by cracking glass and unearthly yells.

"Do I!" exclaimed the midshipman under his breath. "Is that him?"

At that moment a searchlight illumined the figure in question and the midshipman answering his own question, "Yes, that's him," scrambled on up the steps.

Follansbee wondered how long it would take to deliver the Admiral's order and felt his way gingerly through the crowded street.

When the midshipman burst panting upon them they were standing on their chairs with their arms around one another's necks shouting the swinging chorus of

> "The good old summer ti-i-me!
> Oh, the good old summer ti-i-me!
> For she's my tootsie-wootsie in
> The good old summer ti-i-me!"

"Come on up! There's plenty of room on my chair!" cried the boy excitedly, at sight of the midship-

man, "we've only just begun." His face was very, very red and his eyes were very, very bright.

"Oh, the good old summer time!
Oh, the good old——"

"Here, what's the matter with you? Let me alone! What?"

He dropped his arms and climbed soberly enough down to the veranda floor while his comrades continued their refrain.

"Orders! From the Admiral! Is he here? I didn't know that the *Ohio* had come in. With you in a jiffy."

"Don't wait," urged the midshipman, "it's important!"

The boy turned white.

"It isn't—bad news?" he asked apprehensively.

"No, no," answered the other quickly, remembering the news the boy had had the year before. "Just orders."

"Well, I won't spoil their fun," said the boy, echoing the sentiments earlier expressed by Follansbee. "Back in a minute, fellows: I've got to telephone! On with the dance, let joy be unrefined!"

While they slipped through the door the chorus changed again, and as the boy seized his cap, sprang down the steps and started for the launch landing, high above and behind him, he could still hear them singing:

"Here's to the Kid and the *Dirigo*,
He's off for a cruise on the Hwang-ho!"

II

"You sent for me, sir?"

Jack Russell stood in the doorway of the Admiral's cabin on the *Ohio*, cap in hand. The Admiral had been poring over some papers on his desk and for a moment did not dissect the voice from the whirring of the electric fan over his head, but as the boy took a step or two forward he turned and nodded.

"Oh, it's you, Russell. I didn't mean to disturb you on shore, but I've something for you to do and the sooner you start the better."

The boy awaited his words breathlessly—his first orders.

"It's rather a mean job, but I've nobody else available and, if you make good—of course, you *will* make good—in fact, it's rather a chance to distinguish yourself."

"Thank you, sir."

The Admiral paused as if surely to observe the effect of his words.

"I want you to rescue a couple of missionaries."

The boy's countenance remained immobile.

"I received word this evening," continued the Admiral, picking up a half-smoked cigar, "that the rebellion has spread into Hu-peh and as far south as Kui-chan. They have murdered three American missionaries. Most of the others have escaped and have been reported safe,

but nothing can be learned of two missionaries at Chang-Yuan—very estimable people, highly thought of in their denomination."

"Yes, sir," said the boy, his eyes beaming on the Admiral.

"You are to start at once—at once, understand, and go up the river past Hankow and Yochow. At Tung-an you reach the treaty limits, but you haven't time to explain, and probably explanations wouldn't do any good. There are two old forts there, and you'll just have to run by them—that's all. It is six hundred miles to Hankow. With luck you can be there easily inside of four days, but Chang-Yuan isn't on the Yang-tse-Kiang—it's on the Yuang-Kiang somewhere on Lake Tung-ting. You've got to find it first, and the charts are of no use. The trouble is that the lake dries up in winter and in summer overflows all the country round. If you can't get a local guide who knows the channel you will have to trust to luck. The fact that it's in the forbidden territory adds one more difficulty, but if I know Jack Russell's son——"

"Oh, thank you, sir!" cried the boy. "What a chance!" he added half to himself.

"Yes, it is a chance," answered the Admiral, "and I'm glad you've got it, but if you get aground among the rioting natives!—well, it's got to be done."

"I have no interpreter, sir," said the boy.

"Smith has secured one," replied the Admiral, "and through him we have found a Shan-si-man who says he knows the river above Hankow and is willing to act as guide. They are on the lower deck waiting. You will, of course, have the government pilot as far as Hankow. Now, good luck to you. I expect to be here for two

weeks and you will report to me at once on your return your success or failure." He held out his hand. "Good luck to you again."

The boy shook hands with the Admiral but still remained standing beside him.

"Well?" said the Admiral. "Is there anything else?"

"Yes," replied the boy apologetically, "you have not given me the—gentleman's name."

"Bless my soul! So I haven't!" exclaimed the Admiral, fumbling among his papers, then raising one to the light: "The Rev. Theophilus Newbegin," he read slowly, "and wife."

The boy saluted his Admiral and retired with a respectful "Good night, sir." Once in the privacy of the wardroom companionway, however, he began to giggle, which giggle speedily expanded into a loud guffaw on his reaching the main deck. It sounded vaguely like "Newbegin." He leaned against the forward awning pole, shaking with laughter.

"I say, what's the joke?" inquired the midshipman approaching him from the shadow of the main turret. "Let a fellow in, won't you?"

But the boy still shook silently without replying.

"Oh, go on! What's the joke?" repeated the other. "Did 'Whiskers' give you a 'Laughing Julip'?"

"Newbegin!" exploded the boy. "Newbegin!"

"New begin what?" persisted the midshipman irritably. "Have you gone dotty? I hope you didn't act that way in 'Whiskers'' cabin. I believe you're drunk!"

The boy suddenly jerked himself together.

"Look here, Smith, you shut up. I'm your rankin'

officer and I won't have such language. I'll tell you the joke—when I know whether it is one or not."

Smith made a face at him.

"By the way, smarty," continued the boy, "have you got two Chinks for me? If you have, send 'em along. I'm off to the *Dirigo* on the launch."

"Yes, I got 'em at the English consul's. Say, what's up? Can't you tell a feller?"

"Mr. Smith, send those two Chinks to the gangway!" thundered the boy.

The midshipman turned and walked hastily around the turret.

"Here you, Yen, come out of there!" he called.

Two Chinamen arose from the deck where they had been sitting crosslegged, leaning against the turret, and shuffled slowly forward.

"Here are your Chinks!" growled Smith, still aggrieved.

The ensign paid no further attention to him but pushed the nearest Chinaman toward the gangway.

"Get along, boys," he remarked, "your Uncle William is in a hurry." As the smaller of the two seemed averse to haste he gave him a slight forward impetus with his pipe-clayed boot. The two descended more rapidly and he followed. A sudden regret took possession of him as he thought of the possibility of his never seeing Smith again—of his dying of thirst, aground in a dried-up lake—or of being tortured to death in a cage in a Chinese prison.

"Good-by, Smithy," he called over his shoulder. But there was no answer.

The launch was bobbing at the foot of the steps, its screw churning the water into a boiling froth that re-

flected a million strange gleams against the warship's water line. The Chinamen hesitated.

"Get along, boys," he repeated, stepping into the stern sheets. "We've got a long way to go and we might as well begin—Newbegin."

The Chinamen huddled under the launch's canopy, the boy gave the word to go ahead, the bell rang sharply and the launch started on its long trip up to Shanghai.

Slowly the *Ohio* receded from him, somber, implacable, sphinxlike. On her bridge a man was wigwagging to the *Oregon* with an electric signal. The searchlights from the war vessels arose and wavered like huge antennæ feeling for something through the night, now and again paving a golden path from the launch to the ships. The illusion was that the vessels were moving away from the launch, not the launch from them. Out of the zone of the searchlights the water was black and lonesome. Just as soon as the ships got far enough away to appear stationary the launch seemed racing through the water at a hundred miles an hour. Other launches shrieked past bearing to their ships officers who had just come down by train to Woosung. Up the Whompoa River the ten-mile-distant lights of Shanghai cast a dim, nebulous glow against the midnight sky. Two hours later the little *Dirigo* seemed to loom out of the darkness and come rapidly toward them as the launch ran up to her gangway.

"Is that you, McGaw?" called the boy sharply. "Here are two Chinks, an interpreter and another one. Fix 'em up somewhere. We start up the Yang-tse as soon as you can get up steam. I want to make Nanking by day after to-morrow sunrise. Send ashore and get the pilot. Don't waste any time, either."

"All right, sir," answered the midshipman, "we can start in half an hour, sir."

The boy ran up the ladder, followed slowly by the Chinamen. At the cabin companionway he paused and looked at his watch. It was half after one o'clock.

"Here you, boys," he shouted after the Chinamen, "come down into my cabin, I want to speak to you."

He led the way down into his tiny wardroom and threw himself into a wicker chair placed at the focus of two electric fans. The thermometer registered ninety degrees Fahrenheit, but it was almost as hot on deck as below, and below various thirst alleviators were at hand. He poured out a whisky and soda and beckoned to the Chinamen to draw nearer. The first was short, fat, and jovial, with chronic humor creases about his mouth, and his hair done in a long orthodox cue which hung almost to the heels of his felt slippers. The other, the Shan-si man, was tall and square-shouldered, and he carried his chin high and his arms folded in front of him. His cue was curled flat on his head, and on his face was the expression of him who walks with the immortal gods.

"What's your name?" asked the boy, waving the Manila cheroot he was lighting at the fat Chinaman. The little man grinned instantly, his face breaking into stereotyped wrinkles like an alligator-skin wallet.

"Me—Yen. Charley Yen. Me belong good fella," he added with confidence. "Mucha laugh."

"Who's the other chap?" inquired the boy. "He no mucha laugh, eh?"

Yen shrugged his shoulders and, looking straight in front of him, held voluble discourse with his comrade.

"He no say," he finally replied. "He velly ploud. He say his ancestors belong number one men before

Uncle Sam maka live. He say it maka no diffence. You maka pay, he maka show. Name no matter."

"Well, I'm sort of proud myself," remarked the boy, hiding a smile by sucking on his cheroot. "Tell this learned one that I know just how he feels. Tell him I'm going to call him 'Mr. Dooley' after the most learned man in America."

Yen addressed a few remarks to the Shan-si man who murmured something in reply.

"He tanka you."

"I suppose you're a Christian?" asked the boy, suddenly recollecting the object of his expedition.

"I belong Clistian, allasame you," answered Yen, assuming a quasi-devout expression. "Me believe foreign man joss allight."

The boy regarded him thoughtfully.

"Me b'lieve Chinee joss pigeon, too," added Yen cheerfully. "Me mucha b'lieve. B'lieve everyt'ing. Me good fun."

"Yes," said the boy, "how about 'Dooley'?—is he a Christian?"

Yen turned, but at his first liquid syllable the man from Shan-si drew himself up until it seemed that his shoulders would touch the cabin roof, and burst forth into a torrent of speech. Yen translated rapidly, scurrying along behind his sentences like a carriage dog beneath an axletree.

No, he was no Christian. The sword of Hung-hsui-chuen had slain his ancestors. Twenty millions of people had perished by the sword of the Taipings. The murderous cry of "Sha Yao"[1] had laid the land desolate. He was faithful to the gods of his ancestors.

[1] "Slay the Idolaters."

"Tell 'Dooley' I lika him. Say I think he's a good sport," said the boy, nodding at the Shan-si man.

"He say mucha tanks," translated Yen.

"Ask him if he knows Lake Tung-ting."

Mr. Dooley conveyed to the boy through Yen that he had been once to Chang-Yuan. The lake was wide in summer and he had been there at that time. He took pleasure in the service of the American Captain. But the Captain must be patient. He was a musk buyer, buying musk in western Szechuan on the Thibetan border. Two years ago he had saved five hundred taels and returned home to bury his family—nine persons counting his wife—all of whom had perished in the famine. The famine was very devastating. Then he married again one whom he had left at home. He allowed her ten taels a year. She could live on one pickle of wheat and she had the rest to spend as she liked. He preferred better the musk buying and returned. He gave the Captain much thanks.

"That is very interesting," said the boy. "You may go."

There was a tremendous rattling of chains along the sides, the steam winch began to click, and the two Chinamen vanished silently up the companionway. The boy leaned back in his wicker chair and gazed contemplatively about him at the shotgun and sporting rifle over the bookcase, the piles of paper-covered novels, the pointer dog coiled up on the transom, the lithographs fastened to the walls, and the photographs of his father and mother. He took another sip of whisky and water and, putting down the glass, thought of how proud his father would have been to see him in his first command. He had the happy consciousness of having done well, and he was go-

ing to make good—the Admiral had said so. He had had a bully time in the East so far, away ahead of what he had dreamed when at the Naval Academy. That winter at Newchwang, racing the little Manchurian ponies over the springy turf of the polo ground, shooting the big golden pheasants, wandering on leave through the country, stopping at the Chinese inns and taking chances among the Hanghousers. It had been great. Hong Kong had been great. It had been good fun to play tennis and drink tea with the pink-and-white-faced English girls. Well, he was off! His naval career had really begun. He lit another cheroot and strolled leisurely on deck to superintend the operation of heaving up the anchors.

Slowly the *Dirigo* floated away from the lights of Shanghai, felt her way cautiously down the Wompoa to Woosung and into the broad expanse of the Yang-tse. Anchored well out lay the *Ohio* black against the coming dawn. A band of crimson clouds swept the lowlands to the east and between them the tide flowed in an oily purple flood.

III

A HEAVY jar followed by a motionless silence awoke the boy at ten o'clock the next morning. The electric fans were still going and he had a thick taste in his mouth, but he had hardly time to notice these things before he dashed up the companionway and out upon the deck. To starboard the water extended to the horizon, to port a thin line of brown, a shade deeper in color than the water, marked the bank of the great river. Alongside helplessly floated a junk with a great gash in her starboard beam. She was loaded with crockery, and several bales of blue-and-white rice bowls had tumbled into the water, their contents bobbing about like a flock of clay pigeons. The boy saw instantly that owing to the fact that the junk was built in compartments she was in no danger of sinking, and could easily reach shore. Her captain, a half-naked man in a straw hat the size of a small umbrella, was chattering like a monkey at Charley Yen, and a Chinese woman, with a black-eyed baby of two years or thereabouts, sat idly in the stern evincing no particular interest in the accident. The man at the wheel explained that the junk had suddenly tacked. The boy felt in his pocket and, pulling out a Mexican dollar, tossed it to the junk man, who, having rubbed it on his sleeve and bitten it, began to chatter anew to Charley Yen.

"What does he say?" asked the boy.

"He say Captain belong number one man—he mucha tanks," answered Yen with a grin. What a waste! he added. The fellow had sailed on the feast day of Sai-Kao because on that day the Likin or native customs were closed. The gods had punished him. He had no complaint to make and had made none. As the *Dirigo* shot ahead the junk man sprang into the water and began rescuing his rice bowls. They passed no other junk that day, and the leaden sky did not change its shade. Save for the driving of the screw they might have been anchored in the midst of a coffee-colored ocean. Not even a bird relieved the eager search of the eye for relief from the immeasurable brown. The heat continued intense, and was even more unbearable than when the sun's rays created a fictitious contrast of shadow. Early in the afternoon Yen called the boy's attention to a couple of dolphins which were following them, racing first with the *Dirigo* and then with each other. Indeed, they were all three very much alike, and the majestic sweep and rush of the gray-white sides as they rose from the water inspired him with a sense of companionship. How far would they follow, these faithlessly faithful wanderers of the sea? At sunrise the next morning they picked up Nanking and the river gave more evidence of life, but they kept on and soon the city and its walls faded behind them. At noon they passed Wu-hu, at the same hour next day Kiukiang, and when the boy rose on the morning of the third day out, the black mass of crowded up-country junks on the water front of Hankow, swarming like mosquitoes or water flies about a stagnant pool, loomed into view. The river was full of sampans and fishing boats. The man from Shan-si, who had not spoken since the night in the cabin, raised his arm, and

pointing to the pagoda repeated majestically to Yen the words of the ancient Chinese proverb:

"Above is Heaven's Hall,
Below are the cities of Su and Hang."

During the day they passed Kia-yu and Su-ki-kan, and late in the afternoon swept into sight of Yo-chow. The Shan-si man announced that Tung-ting was not so very far away. He even volunteered that this was the greatest country under "Heaven's Hall" for the exportation of bristles, feathers, fungus, musk, nutgalls, opium, and safflower. The place presented a crowded, if not particularly ambitious, appearance. The shore was jammed, as usual, with thousands of junks, and above the town the muddy banks were lined with Hunan timber and bamboo rafts. From the bridge of the *Dirigo* the boy caught from time to time swiftly shifting views of vast swampy plains, with a ragged line of scattered distant mountains. Then they passed beyond the bend in the river and suddenly entered what seemed another ocean, a northwest passage to Cathay. As far as the eye could reach stretched an illimitable void of waters, turbid, motionless. A rocky point, some ten feet higher than the surrounding plain, just gave a foothold for a small temple, a two-story Ting-tse or pavilion, and a lighthouse shaped like a square paper lantern. Ten minutes later it was a black spot in their boiling, brown wake. They were in Tung-ting, that desolate waste of mud, water, and sand-hill islands, half swamp, half lake that rises into being by virtue of the expanding spring torrents, and sinks into its spongelike alluvial bed as mysteriously as it comes.

"Whew!" whistled the boy, "I only hope 'Dooley' knows where he's at. I wish we'd taken on a *lao-ta*

at Hankow. This hole must be a hundred miles long and it's just about ten feet deep!"

In fact, the quartermaster had already called the boy's attention to the long grasses that swung idly upon the top of the water, and to the fact that here and there patches of bottom could be seen.

"Where is Chang-Yuan in all this mess?" he ininquired of 'Dooley' who with Yen occupied a place beside him on the bridge.

The Shan-si pointed to a conical-shaped island several miles distant which raised itself steeply out of the water, on which the boy could see through his glasses clung a Chinese village. Flocks of wild fowl speckled the middle distance with a single lone fisherman on the starboard bow.

"He says," interrupted Yen, "Sim-wu have got on that island. This place belong very good for Chinaman —have got plenty of rice. Plenty water summer time. Winter time water all finish. He says he no think enough water for this boat. Little more far—about thirty li—have got 'nother island—after while catchee Chang-Yuan."

"Ask him how fast his bloomin' lake is drying up," directed the boy.

The Shan-si man shrugged his shoulders.

"He says," announced Yen, "if fish belong thirsty they drink water plenty quick. Fish no thirsty plenty water. Sometime fish drink one foot water in four days."

The sun, which up to this time had been visible only as a dim circle in the gray western sky, suddenly broke through with scorching intensity and at the same moment the *Dirigo* slid gracefully upon a mudbank, half turned,

and slid gracefully off again. The boy bit his lips and stared hopelessly at the yellow plain of water all about him. Then he shook his fist at the Shan-si man.

"Tell him," he roared, "that if we get aground in his infernal lake, I'll hang him up by the thumbs and cut off his head."

Yen conveyed the message.

"Even so," replied the Shan-si, through the interpreter, "the will of the Captain is my will and my head is at the Captain's service, but even the gods cannot prevent the fish from drinking up the lake."

IV

"UGH! What a town!" exclaimed the boy as the *Dirigo* dropped anchor Sunday morning a hundred yards off the embankment of Chang-Yuan. A broiling sun beat pitilessly upon the deck of the gunboat and upon the half mile of mud and ooze which lay along the water edge of the town. Even in summer Chang-Yuan was well above the water, the shore pitching steeply to the level of the lake. Down this incline was thrown all the waste and garbage of the town, and in the slime grubbed and rooted a horde of Chinese dogs and pigs and a score of human scavengers. Just above the *Dirigo* hung a house of entertainment, from the rickety balcony of which a throng of curious citizens stared down inquisitively. To the left stood a guild house and a pagoda, and five noble flights of stone steps crowned with archways led from the water to the roadway, but these last were so covered with slime that climbing up and over the muck seemed preferable to risking a fall on their treacherous surfaces.

"Ugh! What a hole!" repeated the boy. "Hah! Get away there you!" he shouted at the *sampans* which swarmed around the *Dirigo*. "Here you, Yen, tell the beggars to keep off!"

This Yen did, assuring the occupants of the boats that boiling oil would be distributed upon them if they did not retire.

So this was Chang-Yuan! The boy sniffed the malodorous air and wrinkled his nose.

"What though the spicy breezes blow soft o'er Ceylon's Isle,
Where every prospect pleases and only man is vile!

Gee! I wish the old boy that wrote that could have seen this place! Every prospect pleases! Only *man* is vile! This town is a sort of human pigsty so far as I can see. And I'll bet there is a fat old *erfu* hiding in the middle of this rabbit warren who makes a good thing out of it, you bet!"

The crowd on the embankment was growing momentarily larger, a silent, slit-eyed crowd of uncanny yellow faces. Beyond and under the distant line of blue hills thin columns of smoke marked the sites of the towns devastated by the inconsiderate Wu. A friend of Yen's had told the latter all about it. He had come aboard and had breakfasted, and for five hundred cash had been induced to admit that at the present juncture Chang-Yuan was a most unhealthy place for missionaries, that the inhabitants were quite ready to join Wu, and that when he arrived there would be the Chinese devil to pay. He offered for five hundred cash more to act as guide to the *erfu's* house. On the whole, it seemed desirable to accept his proposition. Half an hour later a boat put off from the *Dirigo* containing the boy, Yen, the friend, and four bluejackets. The crowd on the embankment almost pushed one another off the edge in their eagerness to watch the white devils climbing up the steps, and hardly allowed room for the boy and his squad to force a way through them.

Chang-Yuan was a typical example of an inland Chinese town, with dirty, narrow streets, swarming with

human vermin. A throng followed close at the Americans' heels as they marched to the *erfu's* house, but quailed before the bodyguard who rushed out threateningly at them. It took half an hour before the *erfu* could receive them and then they were ushered into a dim room where a flabby old man, with a sly, vacant face sat cross-legged before a curtain. Through Yen, the boy explained that he had called as an act of official courtesy, and that he had come to remove certain American missionaries from danger which he understood existed by virtue of the proximity of the rebel Wu. The *erfu* listened without expression. Then he spoke into the air.

He was much honored at the visit of the American naval officer. But what could a poor old man like himself do against the great Wu? He had no soldiers. The townsfolk were ready to join the rebels. It was only a question of time. He could do nothing. He regretted extremely his inability to furnish assistance to the Americans.

The boy asked if it was true that the rioters were on their way and might reach the town that afternoon. The *erfu* said it was so. Then, after warning him that the United States Government would hold him responsible for the lives of its citizens, the boy retired, convinced that the sooner he got his missionaries away the better it would be for them.

V

THE Rev. Theophilus Newbegin had just concluded divine service upon the veranda of the mission. Beyond the iron gateway a crowd of twenty or so onlookers still lingered, commenting upon the performance which they had witnessed, and jeering at the Chinese women who had just hurried away. Two of the women were carrying babies and all had had the cholera the season before. Because they had not died they attended service and were objects of hatred to their relatives. The Rev. Newbegin closed his Bible and wiped his broad, shining forehead with a red silk handkerchief. He was a large man who had once been fat and was now thin. Owing to the collapse of his too solid flesh his Chinese garments hung baggily upon his person and gave him an unduly emaciated appearance.

Mrs. Newbegin was still stout. Ten years of mission life had not disturbed her vague placidity and she sat as contentedly upon the veranda in Chang-Yuan as she had sat in her garden summer-house in distant Bangor, Maine, whence she and her husband had come. The fire of missionary zeal had not diminished in either of them. The word had come to them one July morning from the lips of an eloquent local preacher, and full of inspiration they had responded to the call and departed "for the glory of the Lord."

And China had swallowed them up. Twice a year,

sometimes oftener, a boat brought bundles of newspapers and magazines, and a barrel or two containing all sorts of valueless odds and ends, antiquated books, games, and ill-assorted clothing. These barrels were the great annoyance of their lives. Often as he dug into their variegated contents the meek soul of the Rev. Theophilus rebelled at being made the repository of such junk.

"One would think, Henrietta," sadly sighed Newbegin, "that the good people at home imagined that we spent our time playing parchesi and the Mansion of Happiness, and reading Sandford and Merton."

Once came a suit of clothes entirely bereft of buttons, and most of the undergarments were adapted to persons about half the size of the missionary and his wife, but the Rev. Newbegin had a little private fortune of his own and it cost very little to live in Chang-Yuan.

The crowd at the gate had been bigger than usual this Sunday, and during the service had hurled a considerable quantity of mud and sticks and a few dead animals which now remained in the foreground, but this was due entirely to the new hatred of the foreign devils engendered by the rioters, and many of those who to-day howled at the gate of the compound had been glad enough six months before to creep to the veranda and beg for medicine and food. Now all was changed. The victorious Wu was coming to drive these child eaters from the land. Already he had laid the country waste for miles to the north and west, and had slain three witch doctors and hung their bodies upon pointed stakes before the temple gates. He was marching even now with his army from Tung-Kuan—a distance of fifteen miles. Nominally loyal to the dynasty, the inhabitants of Chang-Yuan eagerly awaited his coming. The white devils pretended

to heal the sick but in reality they poisoned them and caused the sickness themselves. Those who survived their potions had an evil spirit. The crowd at the gate licked its lips at what would take place when Wu should arrive. There would be a fine bonfire and a great killing of child eaters. Their hatred even extended to the daughter of the foreign devil—her whom once they had been wont to call "The Little White Saint," who had nursed their children through the cholera and brought them rice and rhubarb during the famine. Wu would come during the day and then—! The uproar at the gate grew louder. Newbegin laid his moist hand upon that of his wife and looked warningly at her as there came a rustle of silk inside the open door and their niece made her appearance.

Margaret Wellington, now eighteen years old, had lived with them at Chang-Yuan for ten years. Her father, a naval officer, had died the year they had come out from America and they had picked up the little girl, the daughter of Newbegin's deceased only sister, at Hong Kong and brought her with them. Since then she had been as their daughter, working with them and entering enthusiastically into all their missionary labors. Sometimes they regretted not being able to give her a better education, and that she had no white companions but themselves, but the girl herself never seemed to miss these things and they believed that what was best for them was best for her. Were they not earning salvation? And was she not also? Was it not better for her to live in the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness? Great as was their love for her it was nothing to their love for the Lord Jesus. For that they were ready and eager to lay down their lives—and hers.

"Chi says the rioters are coming," said Margaret. Her hair was done in the Chinese fashion, and she was clad in Chinese dress from head to foot, for she had outgrown all her English clothes years ago and there were no others to take their place.

"Yes, dear," answered her aunt, "I am afraid they are."

"He says they will kill us," continued the girl. She articulated her English words in a way peculiar to herself, due to her strange up-bringing, but there was no fear in her brown eyes, and the paleness of her face was due only to the heat.

The mob at the gate set up a renewed yelling at sight of her.

"Dear, dear!" said her uncle irresolutely, "I don't believe it will be as bad as that. They will calm down by and by." He really felt very badly about Margaret. To be killed was all in the day's work so far as Henrietta and he were concerned. They had anticipated it sooner or later almost as a matter of course, but Margaret——

A stick hurtled across the compound and fell on the veranda at his feet. He knew that it would take but little to excite the mob at the gate to frenzy, but he had made no preparations to defend the compound, for it would have been quite useless. In that swarming city what could one aged missionary and two women do to protect themselves? Chi, the only male convert, was hardly to be depended upon and all the rest were women. No, when the time came they would surrender their lives and accept martyrdom. It was for that that they had come to China. Newbegin's mind worked slowly, but he was a man of infinite courage.

"Dear, dear!" he repeated, looking toward the gate.

"Cowards!" cried the girl, her eyes flashing. "Ungrateful people! They will kill us, and Chi, and Om, and Su, and the other women and their babies. We must do something to protect them."

"Dear me! Dear me!" stammered her uncle again, rubbing his eyes. The crowd at the gate had fallen back and a strange vision had taken its place. Involuntarily he removed his hat. The girl uttered a cry of astonishment as the gate swung open and a young man in a white duck uniform entered the compound followed by four erect figures also in white and carrying rifles on their shoulders.

"Bless me!" exclaimed Newbegin, "it looks like a naval officer!"

The boy came straight to the veranda and touched his cap.

"Are you the Rev. Theophilus Newbegin?" he inquired.

"I am," answered the missionary, holding out his hand.

"I am John Russell, ensign in command of the U. S. gunboat *Dirigo*. I have been sent by Admiral Wheeler to assist you to leave Chang-Yuan."

"Bless me!" exclaimed the Rev. Theophilus. "Very kind of him, I'm sure! And you, too, of course, and you, too! Henrietta, let me introduce you to Ensign Russell. Er—won't those—er—gentlemen come inside and sit down?" he added, staring vaguely at the squad of bluejackets.

"Oh, they're all right!" said the boy, shaking hands with Mrs. Newbegin, and wondering what sort of a queer old guy this was whom he had been sent to rescue.

"Beastly hot, isn't it? Do you have it like this often?"

"Eight months in the year," said Mrs. Newbegin, "but we're used to it."

At this moment the boy became conscious of the presence of one whom he at first took to be the prettiest Chinese girl he had ever seen.

"Let me present my niece—Ensign Russell," said Newbegin.

The boy held out his hand but the girl only smiled.

"It is very good of you to come so far to help us," said the girl.

"Oh, no trouble at all!" exclaimed the boy without taking his eyes from her face. "I'm glad I got here in time," he added.

"Did you come on a ship?" asked the girl.

"Just a little gunboat," he answered, "but that makes me think. This plagued lake is sinking all the time. I got aground in half a dozen places. We've got to start right along back. I'm by no means sure we can get out as it is, but it's better than staying here. You'd oblige me by packing up as quickly as possible."

"Eh?" said the Rev. Theophilus, with something of a start, "what's that?"

"Why, that we've got to start right along or we'll be stuck here and won't be able to get away at all."

"But I can't abandon the mission!" said Newbegin in wonder.

"Certainly not!" echoed his wife placidly. "After all these years we cannot desert our post!"

"But the rioters!" ejaculated the boy. "You'll be murdered! Wu will be here before night, they tell me, and there was a precious crowd of ruffians at the

gate as I came along. Why, you can't stay to be killed!"

Newbegin shook his head.

"You do not understand," he said slowly. "We came out here to rescue these people from idolatry. Some of them have adopted Christianity. There are forty women and children converts. There are others who are almost persuaded; if we abandon them now we shall undo all our labor. No! we must stay with them, and die with them, if necessary, but we cannot go away now."

"Great Scott!" cried the boy, "do you mean to say that——"

"We cannot desert our post," repeated Mrs. Newbegin, looking fondly at her husband.

"But—but—" began the boy.

"Even if we die, there is the example," said Newbegin.

The boy was puzzled. Of missionaries he had a poor enough opinion in general, and this one looked like a great oaf and so did his fat wife, but in the most ordinary way and with the commonest of accents he was talking of "dying for the example." Then his eyes returned to the girl who had been watching him intently all the time.

"But," he exclaimed, "certainly you won't place your niece in such danger?"

"No," said Newbegin, "that would not be right."

"No," repeated the wife, "she had better go back."

"I will not go back," cried the girl, "unless you go, too! This is my home. Your work is my work. I cannot leave Om and Su and their babies."

"Good God!" muttered the boy hopelessly. "Don't you see you *must* come? You *can't* stay here to be mur-

dered by the rioters! I can't *let* you! On the other hand, I can only stay here an hour or two at the most. The *Dirigo* is almost aground as it is and we shall have the dev—deuce of a time getting out of the lake."

"Well," said Newbegin calmly, "I have told you that we cannot accept your offer. We are very grateful, of course, but it's impossible. It would not do; no, it would not do. A missionary expects this kind of a thing. I wish Margaret would go, but what can I do, if she won't go? I can't make her go."

"I want to stay with you," said Margaret, taking his hand. "I will never leave you and Aunt Henrietta."

The boy swore roundly to himself. The crowd of Chinese had returned to the gate, and the air of the compound stank in his nostrils. He took out his watch.

"It's eleven o'clock," he said firmly. "At five I shall leave Chang-Yuan; till then you have to make up your minds. I will return in an hour or so."

Newbegin shook his head.

"Our answer will be the same. We are very grateful. I am sorry not to seem more hospitable. Have you seen the temple and the pagoda?"

"No," answered the boy. "I suppose I might as well do the town, now I'm here."

"I will show you the temple," said Margaret timidly. "They know me there, I nursed the child of the old priest. I will take you."

"Yes," said Newbegin, "they all like Margaret, and I seem to be unpopular now. Will you not take dinner with us?"

"Thank you," said the boy, "take dinner with *me*. Perhaps Mrs. Newbegin would like to see the gunboat, and I have some photographs of the new cruisers."

Margaret gazed beseechingly at her.

"Very well," said Newbegin, "if you will stop for us on your way back from the temple we shall be quite ready, but I must return at once after dinner in order to assemble the members of the mission."

The girl led the way to the gate.

"I'm sure you will not need the soldiers," she said; "it is but a short distance." The crowd, observing that the bluejackets had remained inside the compound, crowded close at the boy's heels as they threaded the streets to the temple.

"I spend a good deal of time here," said the girl; "sometimes it is the only cool place."

The boy paid the small charge for admission and followed his guide up the dim, winding stairs. It was dank and quiet; the priest had remained at the gate. From the blue-green shadows of the recesses upon the landings a score of Buddhas stared at them with sightless eyes. Suddenly they emerged into the clear air upon the platform of the top story and the girl spoke for the first time since they had entered.

"There is Chang-Yuan," she said.

The boy gazed down curiously. Below them blazed thousands of highly finished roofs, picturesque enough from this height, while beyond the town the soup-colored waters of the lake stretched limitless to the horizon. He could see the embankment and the little *Dirigo* at anchor, the *sampans* still swarming around it. To the south lay a country of swamps and of paddy fields; to the north the line of hills and the smoke of the burning towns.

They sat down on a stone bench and gazed together at the uninviting prospect. He was beset with curiosity to ask her a thousand questions about herself, yet he did

not know how to begin. She solved the problem for him, however.

"I have lived here since I was eight years old," she remarked, apparently being unable to think of anything else to say.

The boy whistled between his teeth.

"Do you enjoy it?" he asked.

"I don't know," she replied, "I don't know anything else. Sometimes it seems dull and one has to work very hard, but I think I like it."

"But what do you do," he inquired, "to amuse yourself?"

"I read," she said, "and play with Om and Su. I have taught them some American games. Do you know parchesi and the Mansion of Happiness?"

"Yes, I've played them," he admitted cautiously. "But do you never see any white people except your uncle and aunt?"

"Why, no," she said. "Two summers ago, after the cholera, we visited Dr. Ferguson at Chang-Wing—that is over there. He is a medical missionary, but I did not like him because he asked me to marry him. He was sixty years old. Do you think it was right?"

"Right!" cried the boy. "It was a wicked sin."

"Well, he is the only white man I have met except you," said the girl. "Of course, I can remember a little playing with boys and girls a long, long time ago. Where is your ship?"

"That little white one down there. Can you see?" said the boy, pointing.

"Oh, is that it?" she asked. "Where are its sails?"

"There aren't any," he answered; "it goes by steam."

"I have read the 'Voyage of the Sunbeam,'" she said, "it is a beautiful book. It came out last year in a box. I have nearly twenty books in all."

The boy bit his lips. He was getting angry—angry that an American girl should have been imprisoned in such a hole all her young life—such a girl, too! What right had an elderly man and woman, even though they enjoyed the privilege of consanguinity, to exile a beautiful child from her native country and bring her up for the glory of God in a stewing, stinking, cholera-infested, famine-ridden Chinese village?

"It is strange to find you here," he said finally. "I expected only some freckle-faced, jimmy-jawed, psalm-singing woman, who would tumble all over herself to get away."

She looked at him puzzled for a moment and then burst into a ripple of laughter.

"What funny things you say!" she cried. "I suppose it is strange to find me here, but why should I have freckles or a—what did you call it—a jimmy-jaw? I do sing psalms. But my being here is no stranger than that you should be here. I have often wished some young man would come. You are the first I have known. I am tired of only women."

For a moment he was almost shocked at the open implication, but her frank eyes and matter-of-fact tone told him that the girl could not flirt. It was out of her sphere of existence.

"Would you like to get married?" he hazarded.

"Oh, yes!" she cried. "To a young man!"

"But suppose you had to go away?"

She looked a little puzzled for a moment.

"Of course, I should not like to leave Om and Su,

and I wouldn't leave uncle and aunt, but sometimes—sometimes I have wondered if one couldn't serve God in a pleasanter place and do just as much good."

"Are there any men converts?" he asked.

"Only Chi," she replied, "and I am quite sure he is an idolater at heart. Besides," she added, with a droll look in her eyes, "Chi is a gambler and is always drinking *samshu*. He had been drinking it this morning. I have often spoken to uncle about it, but he has not got the heart to send him away."

The boy laughed.

"I have a certain amount of sympathy with Chi," said he. "If I lived here I should be as bad as he is. I should think you would die of the heat and the smells, and never seeing anybody."

"Oh, it's not so bad," she said spiritlessly. "You see, I have to work pretty hard. There are nearly twenty families now where there is sickness, and in case of anything contagious I go there and nurse. Sometimes I get very tired, but it keeps me occupied and so I suppose I don't think about—other things."

"It's terrible to think of leaving you here," he said. "Can't you persuade your uncle and aunt that their duty does not require them to lay down their lives needlessly?"

"No," she answered, "nothing would persuade them that it was not their duty to remain; nothing could persuade *me* of that."

"And you would not leave them?" he urged, almost tenderly.

"Oh, how *could* I? I must stay with them! Don't you see?" She took hold of his hand and held it. It was quite natural and totally unconscious. "That is what missionaries are for."

A thrill traveled up the nerves of his arm and accelerated the motion of his heart.

"That is not what *you* are for," he said quietly.

"I must! I must!" she repeated. "Oh, I should like to go with you, but I can't."

"But think of yourself!" he cried harshly. "Your uncle and aunt can die for the glory of God if they choose, but they've no right to let you die, too, just out of loyalty to them. It's cruel and wrong. It makes me sick to think of you penned up here in this nasty, yellow place all these years when you ought to have been going to school, and riding and sailing, and playing tennis, and having a good time."

"Oh!" she protested.

"No, hear me out," he insisted, "and having a good time! You can serve God and yet be happy, can't you? And your place isn't here in the midst of cholera and famine and malaria. It's different with people who have lived their lives, but with you, so young and fresh and pretty."

"Oh!" she cried joyfully, "do you think I am pretty? I'm so glad!"

"Do I!" he replied hotly. "Too pretty to be allowed to go wandering around these crooked Chinese streets—" he checked himself. "I say it's a shame! And now to stay here, after all, to be butchered!" He jumped to his feet and ground his teeth.

She gazed at him, startled, and said reproachfully:

"I don't think it is right for you to say things like that. 'Whoso loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' Don't you remember?"

He made no reply, realizing the hopelessness of his position.

"Come," he said, "let us go back."

She was afraid she had offended him but was too timid to do more than to take his hand and let him lead her gently down the winding stairs.

At the gate of the temple they found the crowd augmented by several hundred persons, who closed in behind and marched along to the compound.

Mr. and Mrs. Newbegin were waiting on the veranda and the marines had been having a little *samshu*. The boy was by no means sorry to have the company of his escort for the rest of their walk, and the party made good time to the *Dirigo*. The *bund* was alive with spectators and so was the whole long line of shore. There were Chinese everywhere, on the beach, on rafts, in *sampans*, swimming in the water, all around, wherever you looked there were a dozen yellow faces—waiting—waiting for something. Even in the broil of that inland sun the chills crept up the boy's spine.

The Rev. Theophilus and his wife were much pleased with the gunboat and sat in the cabin in the draught of the two electric fans sipping lemonade, while the boy showed the girl over the *Dirigo*. He had made one last passionate appeal to the missionary and his wife, who had again flatly refused to leave the city. Margaret had likewise reasserted her determination not to desert them. The boy was in despair and cursed them to himself for stupid, bigoted fools. He was showing the girl his little stateroom with its tiny bookcase and pictures and she had paused fascinated before one which showed a group of young people gathered on a smooth lawn with tennis rackets in their hands. All were smiling or laughing. Margaret could not tear herself away from it.

"How happy they look!" she whispered. "How

fresh and clean and cool everything is! What are those things in their hands?"

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"The round things that look like nets," she explained.

The boy gasped.

"Tennis rackets! Do you mean to say you've never seen a tennis racket?"

"I don't think so." She hesitated. "Perhaps ever so long ago when I was a little girl, but I've forgotten."

The boy's anger flamed to a white heat as he glanced out through the stateroom door to where the Rev. Theophilus and wife sat stolidly luxuriating in the artificial draught.

"When I was a child we lived for a while in Shanghai. My father's ship was there," she added.

"Your father in the navy?" cried the boy hoarsely. "What was his name?"

"Wellington," she answered. "He was a commander. He died at Hong Kong ten years ago."

"Wellington! Richard Wellington? He was in my father's class at Annapolis!" cried the boy. Then he groaned and bit his lips. "Oh!—oh! it's a crime!"

He dropped on one knee and took her hands.

"Poor little girl!" he almost sobbed, "poor little girl! Think of it! Ten years! Poor child!"

Margaret laid one hand on his head.

"I am quite happy," she said calmly.

"Happy!" He gave a half-hysterical laugh and shook his fist at the door. Then he leaned over and whispered eagerly:

"You're tired, dear. Lie down for a few minutes and rest. Do—to please me."

She smiled. "To please you," she repeated, as she leaned back among the cushions which he placed for her, and he closed the door.

"Your niece is going to take a little nap," he explained to the missionary. "Here are some prints of the new battleships. I must ask you to excuse me for a moment. Saki will serve dinner directly."

"Oh, certainly—of course," murmured Newbegin, recovering from semi-consciousness.

The boy sprang up the hatch.

"Here, McGaw!" he ejaculated, rushing to where his midshipman stood watching the swarm of *sampans* that covered the lake around the *Dirigo*. "Get up steam! Do you hear? Get up steam as fast as you can! I'm going to hike out of this!"

"All right, sir," replied McGaw in a rather surprised tone. "We can't get off any too soon to please me. Did you ever see such a hole? Hello! What's all that?" He pointed to a highly decorated *sampan* coming rapidly toward them, before which the others parted of their own accord, making a broad line of water to the *Dirigo*.

"By Godfrey! It's the mandarin!" cried the boy. "Where's Yen? Here you, Yen! Go make mucha laugh for the *erfu*!"

The *sampan*, however, turned out not to contain the *erfu*. A small, fat Chinaman in the mandarin's livery stood up and bawled to Yen through his hands.

"He say," translated Yen over his shoulder, "Wu no come. Viceroy soldier man make big fight—kill plenty—Wu finish. Allight now everybody. Missionary come back. Wu no make smoke, anyway. He long, long way off. This fella lika Melican naval officer maka

lil *kumsha*[1] for good news. *Kumsha* for maka mucha laugh."

"What!" roared the boy. "Pay him! Tell him to go to hell!"

McGaw watched the boy as he stamped up and down the deck running his hands through his hair and wondered if he had a touch of sun. The mandarin's messenger still remained in an attitude of expectancy in the bow of the *sampan*. Suddenly the midshipman saw his superior officer rush to the side of the *Dirigo* and throw a Mexican silver dollar at the Chinaman, who caught it with surprising dexterity.

"Tell him," shouted the boy to Yen, "to say to the *erfu* that he could not find us, that we had gone away before he could deliver his message!"

The fat Chinaman prostrated himself in the *sampan*.

"He say allight," remarked Yen.

"Do you believe what he said?" demanded the boy threateningly of McGaw.

"Sure," said the midshipman, "that's right enough! That old friend of Yen's was out here again about an hour ago, snooping around, drunk as a lord. He'd been loading up on *samshu* ever since he went ashore. He says that Wu was killed over a month ago, that his head is on a temple gate five hundred miles north of here, and that the smoke over there is caused by burning brush on the hillsides. The rebellion is all over until next year. It's a great note for us, isn't it?"

But the boy made no reply. He was staring straight through McGaw out across the lake. Suddenly he stepped close to the midshipman and muttered quietly:

[1] Present, gratuity.

"Say, old man, for the sake of old times, can you forget all that?"

"Sure," gasped McGaw, convinced that his previous suspicions had been correct.

"Then forget it and get up steam!" said the boy, turning sharply on his heel.

VI

THE click of the anchor engine was followed by the throbbing of the *Dirigo's* screw, but both the Rev. Theophilus and wife supposed them to be the whirr of an unseen electric fan. Saki's dinner was exceptionally good, and there was a cold bottle of vichy for the missionary, who lingered a long time after the coffee to tell about the ravages of the cholera the year before. When at last they ascended to the deck there was nothing to be seen of Chang-Yuan but a glare of tile roofs on the distant horizon.

"Bless me!" remarked the Rev. Theophilus, gazing stupidly at the coffee-colored waves about them. "What is the meaning of all this? Where are we going? I must go ashore. I have no time for pleasure sailing!"

"Certainly not!" echoed his wife. "Kindly return at once! Why, we are miles from Chang-Yuan!"

And then it was, according to McGaw, that the boy more than rose to the occasion and verified the prophecy of the Admiral, though under a somewhat different interpretation, that he would "make good," for, standing by Margaret's side, he saluted the missionary and with eyes straight to the front delivered himself of the following preposterous statement:

"I exceedingly regret that my orders do not permit me to exercise the discretion necessary to return as you request. The Admiral commanding the Asiatic squadron

specifically directed me to proceed at once to this place and rescue the Rev. Theophilus Newbegin and wife. I was given no option in the matter. I was to *rescue* you, that is all. I received no instructions as to what to do in the event that you preferred not to be rescued, and I interpret my orders to mean that I am to rescue you whether you like it or not. Everything will be done for your entire comfort and Saki has already prepared my stateroom for Mrs. Newbegin. I trust that you will not blame me for obeying my orders."

"Bless me!" stammered the Rev. Theophilus. "Dear me! I really do not know what to say! I am exceedingly disturbed. It seems to me like an unwarrantable interference—not on your part, of course, but on that of the Government. But," he added apologetically, "we cannot blame you for obeying your orders, can we, Henrietta?"

But Mrs. Newbegin's ordinarily vacuous face bore a new and radiant expression.

"I see the hand of Providence in this, Theophilus!" she said.

"Yes—yes!" he answered, wiping his forehead. "God moves in a mysterious way—in an astonishing way, I might say." He looked regretfully over his shoulder toward the fast-vanishing Chang-Yuan.

Margaret slipped her hand into his and laid her head on his arm. "I am so glad, uncle!" she whispered. He patted her cheek.

"Yes, yes, it is probably better this way," he sighed. "Henrietta, let us retire to the cabin and consider what has happened. My young friend, be assured we bear you no ill will for your involuntary action in this matter."

* * * * *

Four evenings later under the snapping stars of the midsummer heaven Margaret Wellington and Jack Russell sat side by side in two camp chairs on the bridge of the *Dirigo*. The gunboat was sweeping round the great curve of the Yang-tse above Hankow and to starboard the pagodas of Wu-chang rose dimly through the lights of the city. Below in the hot cabin sat the Rev. Theophilus and his wife reading "The Spirit of Missions."

"And now," said the boy, as he drew her hand through his, "you are going to be happy forever and always. The world is full of wonderful things and nice, kind people who are trying to do good and yet have a jolly time while they are doing it. And you will have the dearest mother a girl ever had. How proud she'll be of you! Now promise to forgive me; you know why I did it! Do you suppose I'd have dared to do it if I hadn't?"

"Yes," she answered happily, "I knew why you did it and I forgive you, only, of course, it really was very wicked. But——"

The sentence was never finished—to the delight of the government pilot behind them.

"What do you think my uncle will say when we tell him?" she laughed.

"He'll say, 'Bless me! Dear me! I don't know!'" answered the boy, and they both giggled hysterically.

Abaft the black shadow of the smokestack Yen and the Shan-si man stood in silence watching the two on the bridge. The Shan-si man raised his arm once more in the direction of Wu-chang and made a joke.

"Above is Heaven's Hall!" said he. "Below are—the two most foolish things in all the world—a boy and a girl!"

THE VAGABOND

"There is no essential incongruity between crime and culture."
—*Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying."*

IT was five o'clock, Sunday afternoon, and the slanting sunbeams had crawled across the bed and up the walls and vanished somehow into the ceiling when Voltaire McCartney came to himself, kicked off the patchwork quilt, elevated his torso upon one elbow and took an observation out of the dingy window. The prospect of the Palisades to the northwest was undimmed, for the wind was blowing fresh from the sea and the smoke from the glucose factory on the Jersey side was making straight up the river in a long, black horizontal bar, behind which the horizon glowed in a brilliant, translucent mass of cloud. McCartney swung his thin legs clear of the bed and fumbled with his left hand in the pocket of a plaid waistcoat dangling from the iron post. The act was unconscious, equivalent to the automatic groping for one's slippers which perchance the reader's own well-regulated feet perform on similar occasions. The pocket in question yielded a square of white tissue, which the fingers deftly folded, transferred to the other hand, and then filled with tobacco. Like others nourished upon stimulants and narcotics, McCartney awoke *absolutely*, without a trace of drowsiness, nervously ready to do the

next thing, whatever that might chance to be. His first act was to pull on his shoes, the second to slip his suspenders over his rather narrow shoulders, and the third to light the cigarette. Then he sauntered across the room to the window sill, upon which slept profoundly a small tortoise-shell cat, and picked up a pocket volume, well worn, which he shook open at a point designated by a safety match. For several moments he devoured the page with his eyes, his hollow face filled with peculiar exaltation. Then he expelled a cloud of smoke sucked from the glowing end of his cigarette, tossed away the butt, and thrust the book into his hip pocket.

"O would there were a heaven to hear!
O would there were a hell to fear!
Ah, welcome fire, eternal fire,
To burn forever and not tire!

"Better Ixion's whirling wheel,
And still at any cost to feel!
Dear Son of God, in mercy give
My soul to flames, but—let me *live!*"

He turned away from the window, and pale against the gaudy west his profile shone drawn and haggard. Restlessly he filched his pocket for another cigarette, and tossed himself wearily into a painted rocker. The cat awakened, elongated herself in a prodigious and voluptuous yawn of her whole body, dropped to the floor and leaped with a single spring into her master's lap. He stroked her sadly.

"Isabeau! My poor Isabeau! I envy you—creature perfect in symmetry, perfect in feeling!"

The cat rubbed her head against the buttons of his coat. McCartney leaned back his head. The little room

was bare of ornament or of furniture other than the chair, save for a deal table at the foot of the bed, bearing a litter of newspapers and yellow pad paper.

"I am discouraged by the street,
The pacing of monotonous feet!"

murmured the man in the rocker. The light died out above the Palisades; the cat snuggled down between her master's legs.

"Dear Son of God, in mercy give
My soul to flames, but let me *live!*"

he added softly. Then he lifted the cat gently to the floor, threw on a short, faded reefer coat, and opened the door.

"Well, Isabeau, it's time for us to go out and earn our supper!"

McCartney gazed solemnly down from the small rostrum upon which he was standing at the end of the saloon without so much as a smile in answer to the roar of appreciation with which his time-worn anecdote had been received.

"Dot's goot!" shouted an abdominal "Dutchman," pounding the table with his beer mug. "Gif us 'n odder!"

"Ya!" exclaimed his *confrère.* "Dot feller, he was a corker, eh?" He put up his hands and making a trumpet of them bawled at McCartney: "Here, kommen sie unt haf a glass bier mit us!"

Three teamsters, a card sharp, a porter, two cabbies, and a dozen unclassables nodded their heads and stamped,

while the bartender passed up a foaming stein to the performer. McCartney blew off the froth, bowed with easy grace to the assembled company, and drank. Then he descended to the table occupied by the Germans.

"May you all have better luck than the gentleman in my story," he remarked. "But I for one shall go straight to the other place. Heaven for climate—hell for society, eh? Hoch der Kaiser!"

The Germans threw back their heads and laughed boisterously.

"Make that beer a sandwich, will you? Here, Bill, bring me a slice of cold beef and a cheese sandwich!"

The bartender opened a small ice chest and produced the desired edibles, to which variation in their offered hospitality the two interposed no objection, being in fact somewhat in awe of their intellectual, if not distinguished, guest. As McCartney ate he produced a handful of transparent dice.

"Ever see any dice like those?" he asked, rolling them across the wet table. The first German examined them with approval.

"Dose is pooty, eh?" he remarked to his neighbor. "I trow you for die Schnapps, eh?"

McCartney watched them covetously as they emptied the leathern shaker, solemnly counting the spots at the conclusion of each cast.

"Here, let me show you how," volunteered their guest. "Poker hands." He rattled the dice and poured them forth. They came up indiscriminately.

"Not so goot, eh?" commented the German. "I'll trow you. I'll trow ennyboty mit *clear* dice. Venn dey ain't loated I can trow mit ennyboty." He held them up to the light. "Dese is clear—goot."

"Three times for a dollar," said McCartney.

"So," answered the German. He threw carefully, and counted two sixes, an ace, a three, and a five. He left in the sixes and threw the others. This time he got an ace and two fives. Once more he put them back, but accomplished no better result.

"Now, I'll show you," said McCartney, and emptied the shaker. The dice tumbled upon the table to the tune of two aces, two deuces, and a five. He put back the deuces and the five and threw another ace, a three, and a five.

"I win," he remarked. "You don't know how!"

"Vat's dot? Don't know how, eh!" roared the other. "I trow you for fife dollars, see? Gif me dose leetle dice." He threw with a heavy bang that shook the table. This time he got two sixes, two aces, and a five, and put back the latter. Securing another ace he leaned back and took a heavy draught of beer. "Full house! Beat dat eef you can!"

McCartney tossed the dice carelessly upon the board for two fours, one ace, and two fives. To the amazement of the Germans, he left in the ace and returned the other four to the shaker. This time he got two more aces. His last throw gave him another ace and a five.

"Zum teuffel!" growled the German, thrusting his hand into his pocket and drawing forth a dirty wad of bills. "Here, take your money!" He handed McCartney six dollars.

"Kind sirs, good night," remarked McCartney, thrusting the bills into his waistcoat pocket and arising from his place. "I must betake me hence. Experience is the only teacher. Let me advise you never to play games of chance with strangers."

The two Germans stared at him stupidly.

"You don't understand? Permit me. You saw the dice were not loaded? Very good! You examined them? Very good again. Your powers of observation are uncultivated, merely. The stern mother of invention —that is to say necessity—has obeyed the law of evolution. Three of the dice in my pocket bear no even numbers. The information is well worth your six dollars. Again, good night."

"Betrüger!" cried the loser of the six dollars, arising heavily and upsetting his beer. "Dot feller skivinded us mit dice geloaded! *Sheet! Sheet!*"

They blundered toward the side entrance, while McCartney side-stepped into an adjacent portal. Long Acre Square gleamed from end to end. Above him an electric display, momentarily vanishing and reappearing, heralded the attributes of the cigar sacred to the Scottish bard. Peering through the haze generated by the countless lights a few tiny stars repaid diligent search. A scanty number of pedestrians was abroad. The pantheon of delights shone silent save for an occasional clanging car. The Germans passed in search of an officer, excitedly jabbering about the "sheet," their angry expressions reverberating along the concrete, fading gradually into the hum of the lower town.

Then slowly into view crept one of those anachronisms of the metropolis—a huge, shaggy horse slowly stalking northward, dragging a rickety express wagon whereon reposed a semisomnolent yokel. Hitched by its shafts to the tail of the wagon trailed a decrepit brougham (destined, probably, for country-depot service), behind this a debilitated Stanhope buggy, followed by a dogcart, a phaeton, a buckboard, with last of all a

hoodless Victoria. This picturesquely mournful procession of vanished respectability staggered hesitatingly past our hero, who regarded it with vast amusement. To his fanciful imagination it appeared like the fleshless vertebræ of a sea serpent slowly writhing into the obscurity of the night. Occasionally one of the component dorsals would strike an inequality in the pavement and start upon a brief frolic of its own, swinging out of line at a tangent until hauled back into place again by the pull of the shaggy horse. Sometimes all started in different directions at one and the same time, and the semblance to a skeleton snake was heightened—even the ominous rattle was not wanting. The Victoria looked restful to McCartney, whose legs were always tired.

> "Why should we fret that others ride?
> Perhaps dull care sits by their side,
> And leaves us foot-men free!"

he hummed to himself, recollecting an old college glee.

"All the same that old bandbox looks not uncomfortable. How long is it since I have used a cushion! Poverty makes a poor bedfellow!"

As the last equipage swung by, McCartney took a few steps in the same direction and clambered in. He had become a "foot-man" in fact, but a very undignified and luxurious one, who lay back with his feet crossed against the box in front of him. Of all the lights on Broadway none glowed so comfortingly for McCartney as the tip of his cigarette.

"My prayer is answered," he remarked softly to himself. "Thus do I escape the 'monotonous feet.' Had I only Isabeau I should have attained the height of human happiness—to have dined, to smoke, to ride on cushions

one. Here's a brother to keep you company," said he, pushing in another.

The hymn ceased and the congregation began to pass out. McCartney retired into the darkness of a corner, scrutinizing every face among the worshipers. Last of all came a little old man scuffling along with the aid of a cane. His snowy beard gave him an aspect singularly benign. McCartney laughed to himself.

"Grandpapa, I trust we shall become better acquainted," he remarked under his breath, as he followed the old fellow down the street.

The loud vibrations of the bell in the deserted rooms of the floor below brought no immediate response, and instead of a brighter blaze of hospitality, the light in the hall was hurriedly extinguished. McCartney only pressed his thumb to the round receptacle of the bell the more assiduously, repeating the process at varying intervals until the light again illumined the door. A shadow hesitated upon the lace curtain, then the door itself was slowly, doubtfully opened, and the old man shuffled into the vestibule, peering suspiciously through the iron fretwork. McCartney, without going too close —he knew well the dread of human eyes, face to face— looked nonchalantly up and down the street, realizing that he must give his quarry time to regain the self-possession this midnight visit had shattered. After a pause the bolt was shot and the door opened upon its chain.

"Was that you ringing? What do you want?"

"Yes, it was I who rang. I trust you'll excuse the lateness of my call. It's imperative for me to see you."

"Who are you? And what do you want to see me about?"

"My name is Blake. Blake of the *Daily Dial.* It is a personal matter."

"Don't know you. Don't know any Blake. Don't read the *Dial.* What is the personal matter?"

"For God's sake, sir, let me speak with you! It's a matter of life and death. Don't deny me, sir. Hear me first."

The little old man closed the door a couple of inches.

"Want money, eh?"

"Help, sir. Only a word of sympathy. I've a dying child——"

"Can't you come round in the morning?"

"It will be too late then. I implore you to listen to me for only a few moments. I've been waiting two hours upon the sidewalk for you to return, and it's too late for me to go elsewhere."

The door opened sufficiently for the old man to thrust his face close to the crack and inspect his visitor from head to heels. Evidently McCartney's appearance and the manner of his speech had made an impression which was now struggling with prudence and common sense. The deacon, moreover, had a reputation to support. It would not do to turn an applicant away who might be in dire extremity—and who might go elsewhere and carry the tale with him.

"Won't a bed ticket do you, eh? And come in the morning?"

McCartney saw the vacillation in the other's mind.

"I'm sorry, but I must see you now, if at all. To-morrow might be too late."

The owner of the house closed the door, unslipped the chain and retreated inside the hall to the foot of the stairs, leaving the way free for his visitor to follow.

McCartney entered, hat in hand, and shut the door behind him, catching at a glance the austerity of the furniture and walls. To him every inch of the Brussels carpet, the ponderous, polished walnut hatrack, the massive blue china stand with its lonely umbrella and stout bamboo cane, and the heavily framed oil copy of St. John spoke eloquently.

"I must ask your pardon again, sir, for disturbing you. But a man of your character, as you have no doubt discovered, must suffer for the sake of his reputation. I——"

McCartney swayed and seized a yellow-plush *portière* for support. In a moment he had regained control of himself—apparently.

"A touch of faintness. I haven't eaten since morning." He looked around for a chair. The old man made a show of concern.

"Nothing to eat! Dear me! Well, well! Come in and sit down. Perhaps I can find something."

Deacon Andrews led the way past the stairs and swung open the door to the dining room. It had a musty smell, just a hint of the prison pen at noon time, and McCartney shuddered. The old man disappeared into the darkness, struck a sulphur match, a fact noted by his guest, and with some difficulty lighted a gas jet in a grotesquely proportioned chandelier. The gas, which had blazed up, he turned down to half its original volume.

"There, sit down," said he, pointing to a mahogany chair shrouded in a ticking cover, and settled himself in another on the opposite side of a great desert of table. McCartney did as he was bidden, mentally tabulating the additional facts offered to his observation by the remainder of the room. There was evident the same bare

vastness as in the outer hall. Two more oils, one of mythological, the other of religious purport, balanced each other over the wings of a huge black carven sideboard. For the rest the yellow and brown wall paper repeated itself interminably into the shadow.

"Feel better?" asked the deacon.

"Yes, much," answered McCartney. "I'm used to going without food. The body can stand suffering better than the mind—and the heart."

"Let's try and fix up the body first," remarked the deacon, opening a compartment beneath the sideboard. "Here, try some of these," and he placed a plate of water biscuits upon the table.

McCartney essayed more or less successfully to eat one, while the old man retreated into the pantry and, after a hollow ringing of water upon an empty sink, returned with a thick tumbler of Croton.

"Good, eh? Nothing like plain flour food and Adam's ale! Now, what is it you want to say? I must be getting to bed."

McCartney hastily swallowed the last of the biscuit and leaned forward.

"If I could be sure my dear wife and child could have this to-night, I should be happy indeed. Oh, sir, poverty can be borne—but to see those whom we love suffer and be powerless to help them—I can hardly address myself to you, sir. I have never asked for charity before. I'm a hard-working man. I had a good position, a little home of my own, and a wife and child whom I loved devotedly. I care for nothing else in the world. Then came the chance that ended so disastrously for us. I thought it was the tide in my affairs, you know, that might lead on to fortune. My wife

was offered a position in a traveling company at sixteen dollars a week, and they agreed to take me with them as press agent at thirty-five—fifty dollars a week all told. Can you blame us?"

"I don't approve of play acting," said the deacon.

"Don't think the less of my wife for that. She meant it for the best." McCartney's face worked and he brushed his eyes with the back of his hand.

"Look here, what's the use wasting time," interrupted the deacon. "How do I know who you are?"

"You have only my word, sir, that is true."

"What did you say you did for a living?"

"I'm a reporter. I live by my pen, sir, and I write articles on various subjects for the newspapers. I have even written a very modest book. But the modern public has crude taste in literature," sighed McCartney.

"Well, go on, now, and tell me about your trip or whatever it was," said the deacon.

"I gave up for the time, as I said, the precarious livelihood of a space writer. We sublet our rooms. I spent what little money I had saved upon a costume for my wife, and we started out making one-night stands."

"What was the name of your play?" inquired the deacon abruptly.

"'The Two Orphans,'" replied McCartney without hesitation. "We got along well enough until we reached Rochester, and there the show broke down—went to the wall. We were stranded, without a cent, in a theatrical boarding house. My wife was taken down with pneumonia and little Cathie——"

"Little what?" asked the deacon.

"Short for Catherine—caught the croup. We had nowhere to turn. I pawned my watch to pay our board

bill. We were sleeping in a single room—the three of us. For days I tramped the streets of Rochester looking for some work to do, but I was absolutely friendless and could find nothing. My wife got a little better, but little Catherine seemed to grow worse. I pawned my wife's wedding ring, all my clothes but those I have on, even my baby's tiny little bracelet we bought for her on her second birthday—O God, how I suffered! We talked it all over and decided that as New York was the only place where I was known, I had better return and earn enough money to send for them as soon as I could. The manager let me use his pass back to the city. I reached here three days ago, but I have found no work of any sort. Some of the press boys have shared their meals with me, but for the moment I'm penniless. Meantime my wife is lying sick in a strange household and my little girl may be dying!" McCartney sobbed brokenly. "I'm at my last gasp. I've nowhere to sleep to-night. No money to buy breakfast. I can't even pay for a postage stamp to write to them!"

"What street did you stay in at Rochester?"

"1421 Maple Avenue," shot back McCartney. "I wish you could see my little Catherine—she's such a tiny ball of sunshine. Every morning she used to come and wake me, and say, 'Come, daddy, come to breafcrust!' She couldn't pronounce the word right—I hope she never will. She called the little dog I gave her a fox 'terrial' dog. Some people say children are all alike. If they could only see *her*—if she's still alive. Why *I* wouldn't give ten cents to live if I could only make sure Edith would have enough to get along on and give Catherine a decent education. I want that girl to grow up into a fine noble woman like her mother. And to think

the last time I saw her she was lying in a stuffy hall bedroom in a third-class lodging house, her little forehead burning with fever, with my poor sick wife stretched beside her, fearing to move lest she should wake the child. She may be dead by this time, for I've had no work for three days, and I've been able to send them nothing—nothing! They may have been turned out into the streets, for the board bill was a week overdue when I left them. Don't you see it drives me nearly mad? I'm worse off a thousand times than if I stayed there with them. Sometimes I think there can't be any God, for if there was He'd never let me suffer so. And all for a little money—just because I can't pay the fare back to my sick wife and dying baby—my poor, sweet, little baby!"

McCartney's voice broke and he buried his haggard face on his arms. For a moment or two neither spoke, then the deacon sighed deeply.

"You do seem to have had hard luck," he remarked awkwardly. McCartney was still too overcome with emotion to reply.

"I reckon I'll have to break my rule and help you without references. I don't believe in giving, as a rule, unless you know who you are giving to."

He put his hand in his pocket.

"But I'll do it this time." He placed two quarters upon the table.

"There, half a dollar'll keep you nicely for a while. Of course, there's no use sendin' money to Rochester. Your landlady can't turn sick folks into the street, and if she does they can go to the hospital——"

He paused, startled by the look on McCartney's face, for the latter had risen like an avenging angel, white and trembling. Pointing at the two harmless coins, he cried:

"Is that your answer to the appeal of a starving man? Is that all your religion has done for you? Is that how you obey your Lord's teachings? 'Cup of cold water' indeed! Cold water! Cold water! That's what you've got instead of blood; you withered old epidermis! You miserable, dried-up apology for a human being!" He paused for breath, sweeping the room with indignant scorn.

"I know your kind! You old Christian Shylock! You bought those chromos at an auction! You took that old sideboard for a debt—yes, a debt at eighteen per cent interest. You don't pay a cent of taxes. You sing psalms and bag your trousers with kneeling on the platforms at prayer meetings and then loan out the church's money to yourself on worthless securities. You're too mean to keep a cat, for the cost of her milk. You read a penny newspaper and take books out of a circulating library. You put a petticoat on these chairs so your miserly little body won't wear out the seats."

The lean vagabond half shouted his anathema, the pallor of his face and brow darkening red from the violence of his passion. It was the very ecstasy of anger. Before it the little man with the white hair shrank into himself, diminishing into his chair, seeking moral opportunity of escape.

McCartney looked at the two coins contemptuously.

"Bah!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Half a dollar for a dying child and a starving woman, to say nothing of a shelterless man!" He broke into a mirthless laugh. "Allow me to return your generous answer to my application for assistance. A code of morals of my own, which doubtless you would not appreciate, compels me to restore what is obviously ten times more precious to the donor than to the recipient."

He filliped the two coins across the table into the lap of his host, who still crouched furtively with his head near the table.

"It makes me sick to look at you! Who could gaze without disgust upon the spectacle of an ossified creature like yourself, creeping through bare, deserted old age toward a grave mortgaged to the devil? Ugh! It is the horridest spectacle I have seen in a month."

"You're mad!" muttered the old man with hoarse fearfulness.

"Sometimes, but not now!" retorted McCartney. "I'll hold my evening session for Misers a moment longer. I pity you, Lord Pinhead Penurious! I pity you that you should have gone through life, a small term of say sixty years, in such stupidity. Sixty years of grubbing, of weighing meat and adding figures, of watching the prices fools pay for stocks, and how many days of *life*? How many good deeds? Oh, marvelous lack of wit! What know you of real happiness? Let me introduce myself, since you're so blind. What do you think I am, my good old Noddy Numbskull?"

"Crazy!" gasped the old man. "Do be quiet! Let me get you something more to eat."

"A thief, at your service. Oh, don't start! I'll not carry away your mahogany sideboard nor your bronze chandelier. I steal only to keep myself in purse—to eat. You dig to add to the column of figures in your pass book. I walk among the gods. My brain is worth twenty gray bags like yours. I have thoughts and dreams in terms to you unintelligible. I can live more in a week than haply you have done in the course of your whole crawling existence. What do you know of the spirit? Behind your altar sits a calf of gold. You grovel before

it and slip out at the bottom the shekels you drop in at the top. To you the moon will always be made of green cheese, that 'orbed maiden with white fire laden'! Your hands are callous from counting money, your brain is——"

The old fellow arose. "Leave my house! Get out of here!"

He was an absurd figure, not more than five feet high, in his black broadcloth suit and string tie, as he faced McCartney's blazing eyes, and the latter laughed at him.

"I will fast enough. But you see I'm having a sensation—*living*. I'm doing good. Oh, yes, I am. If not to you, at least to myself. Do you think I'll ever forget little 'Cathie'? God! How I could have loved a real child! And I've only a cat." He laughed again. "I don't blame you for thinking me crazy—even you. Come, now, wasn't my picture of the phthisic wife and moaning child worth a place on the line—I mean, wasn't it good, eh? Worth more than two beggarly quarters? It gave me a thrill—what I need—it'll keep me alive for another twenty-four hours, without this." He held up a nickel-plated hypodermic syringe. It shone in the gaslight, and the old man started back and held out his hands.

"Don't shoot!" he cried in senile terror.

"Carrion!" cried McCartney. "Why do I waste my time on you? Why? Because I'm in your debt. I owe you little Catherine. I shall never forget her. And you, *you*—you are her foster father! God forbid!"

The old man sat down resignedly at the extreme side of the table.

"By God, I pity you!" exclaimed the lean man. "Do you hear that? *I* pity *you*—*I*!—a wretched,

drugged, wilted, useless bundle of nerves twisted into the image of a man; a chap born with a silver spoon, with gifts, who tossed them all into the gutter—threw 'a pearl away richer than all his tribe'; a miserable creature who can't live without this" (he pressed the needles into his wrist), "and yet I wouldn't change with you! I'm more of a man than you. My very wants are sweeter than any joys your brutish senses can ever feel.

"O would there were a heaven to hear!
O would there were a hell to fear!
Dear Son of God, in mercy give
My soul to flames, but let me live!

"You don't know what that means! Haven't the vaguest idea. You're a mummy. You'll be the same ten thousand years from now. I suppose you think I made it up, eh?

"I am discouraged by the street,
The pacing of monotonous feet.

"That's all *you* want. You couldn't understand anything else, and yet it's my torture, and my salvation!"

The glow came back into McCartney's eyes and he repeated:

"Yes, that picture of little Catherine was worth more than two quarters. It ought to have been good for twenty dollars. It's worth more than that to me."

McCartney's voice had grown strong and clear.

The old fellow looked at him sharply and changed his tone. He must get this madman out of his house. He must humor him.

"Come, come, that's all right. Cheer up! Why, I had a little girl of my own once."

McCartney pierced him through and through with swimming eyes.

"And her memory was only worth two miserable quarters? You lie, you wretched old man, you lie!"

The old fellow started back. The door banged. McCartney was gone.

THE MAN HUNT

I

RALSTON strode briskly up Fifth Avenue, conscious all about him of the electric pressure of War. It was six o'clock—the hour when the hard outlines of the tops of office buildings and the prosaic steeples of contemporary religion, flushed with rose, and "fretted with golden fire," melt with a glow of unreality into the darkening blue. Here and there in the eastern sky tiny points trembled elusively, and a molten crescent followed him along the housetops, its pale disk growing each instant brighter.

Wheel traffic on the avenue, between the hours of nine and seven, had been suspended, and many pedestrians preferred the icy inequality of the street to the crowds upon the pavements. For the most part the movement was northward, meeting at the corners transverse streams of clerks and salesgirls jostling one another, arm in arm, down the side streets. Here and there could be seen an officer in service coat, with sword dangling beneath, and occasional knots of soldier boys in the uniform of the National Guard.

A little lad with an air of vast importance ran just ahead of Ralston, unlocking the bases of the electric lights

Note.—Action takes place about the year 1915.

and, in some mysterious way, turning them on. To his intense gratification he had succeeded in distancing his fellow across the way by half a block. Above the shuffle of feet could be heard the cries of the newsmen, "Extra! Extra! President calls for twenty new regiments! Latest extra! Twelfth to the front." These, clutching huge bundles of papers to their breasts, hurled themselves against the tide of humanity, appearing from all directions and sweeping down like vultures upon any individual wayfarer so unfortunate as to have his hand momentarily in his pocket. Their bundles quickly disappeared. Then they would run panting to the corners where the paper wagons were in waiting. It was a scene full of inspiration to Ralston, but it impressed him that, after all, the crowd seemed primarily interested in its own affairs—its business, its cold ears, its suppers.

For the newspapers the war had created a fierce, insatiable public maw. Circulations sprang by leaps into the millions. Extras followed one another by minutes. For the people in the shops it meant night work and longer hours; for society, something new to talk about; for the theaters, packed houses which roared at topical songs in which "war" rhymed with "bore," "rations" with "nations," "company" with "bump any," "foes" with "toes," "sword" with "board," and gloried in "Eddie" Foy and "Jo" Weber dressed as major generals. "Light Cavalry" and "Dixie" had superseded all other selections upon the musical programmes, and special rows of seats were reserved for "officers in uniform." The bars were jammed, traveling men sat in more thickly serried ranks than usual in the hotel windows, and Slosson's Billiard Parlors were lined with standing spectators.

The commercial life of the city boiled over. Only the brokers came home early.

As Ralston entered Madison Square he found himself entangled in a dense throng wedged around an improvised scaffolding, upon which was displayed the electric-lighted bulletin of one of the big dailies. A man in a yellow-and-black-striped sweater was rapidly painting with a brush upon a blackboard in some white liquid the latest marching orders:

"*Twelfth Regiment leaves via Penn. R. R. to-morrow* 7 A.M."

"*Terrible Riots in Tokio.*"

"*R. W. Ralston appointed Second Assistant Secretary of the Navy.*"

As he fought his way through the crush he heard his name repeated on all sides, and a strange exaltation took possession of him. He had a curious desire to call out: "Yes. I'm Ralston! The Ralston up there! I'm he! That one! I'm Ralston!"

He felt like a prince suddenly called from seclusion to rule his people. He was going to do things which these garlic-breathing folk would spell out and marvel at. How often his name would flash across the square or play duskily upon the curtains at the theaters, linked with generals and "fighting" admirals. He laughed with the joy of it, that he, the settled-down man of the world, the hunter, the manager of estates, the student of literature, the lover of poetry, was going to play the popular hero.

He broke through the outer ring of the crowd and made for the park. A huge flag draped the porch of the Fifth Avenue Hotel. The flush in the west had faded to a streaky white and the stars had sprung from behind their curtains. A white beam of light played steadily from the

tower of the Garden into the north. When it should swing to the south actual hostilities would have commenced. All the windows in the office buildings gleamed with activity. As he looked back he could see the man in the sweater erasing his name with a sponge, and his heart sank with momentary disappointment. Some new thing was coming over the wires hot with the fire of war. At the same moment he heard up the avenue the faint tapping of drums and the shriek of the fifes.

A line of mounted police burst into the square. The throng in front of the bulletin board surged over to the park. Then with a clash of cymbals and a prolonged rattle from the drums a full band burst into "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night." The regimental flags came into view. In the light of the stars, in the dying of the day, in the moment of his exaltation, Ralston recognized the colors of his old regiment. Had he chosen he might have been marching at the head of his company even then. The crowd, cheering, forced him to the curb and into the street. With brimming eyes he doffed his hat and saluted the colors.

As he did so a sudden wild yell went up from the multitude. From one side of the square to the other reigned pandemonium. The very sound of the band was drowned in the uproar. From the top of the Flatiron Building a stream of rockets broke into the sky, and with a single movement the throng turned and gazed tensely at the Garden Tower, as the white shaft of light slowly swung into the south.

II

THE little white house on East Twenty-fifth Street was ablaze with light as Ralston eagerly mounted the low stoop and pressed the bell. The visitor knocked the slush from his overshoes, slapped the left pocket of his coat as if to make certain that something was still safely there, stepped quickly across the threshold when the butler opened the door, handed the man his hat, threw off his fur coat upon an ebony chair, and only paused, and that but for a moment, at the entrance of the drawing-room. He was a tall, clean-built, brisk young man, thoroughly American in type, with an alert face, which, if not handsome, was nevertheless agreeable and attractive—a man, in a word, whom one would not hesitate to address upon the street, provided the question was pertinent and the information essential.

It was clear from his manner that he was no stranger, but to-day there were more women than usual at Miss Evarts's Monday afternoon, and the lights and chatter seemed a bit confusing to one whose mind was charged with the importance of a newly acquired responsibility. Miss Evarts was an old friend of his mother's, who, somewhat to his amused annoyance, took it upon herself to assume toward him a sort of sisterly attitude, which allowed her the privileges of relationship without prejudice to a certain degree of elderly sentiment. Attendance upon her selectly Bohemian gatherings was a duty

which he performed when in town, with a regularity attributable less to a regard for Miss Evarts herself than to the fact that Ellen Ferguson was usually to be found there presiding over the tea table and ready for a brisk walk uptown afterwards.

"Ha! There he is now!" exclaimed a middle-aged man, with iron-gray hair and pointed mustaches, as the newcomer parted the *portières*.

The group about the warrior turned with one accord and stared, at present teacups, in his direction.

"Good afternoon, ladies and soldier," said Ralston. "I am the torchbearer of war. Firing has begun. The searchlight on the Garden is leveled south—like the lance of the horseman on the tower in Irving's 'Legend of the Arabian Astrologer.'"

The colonel set down his cup and pulled his mustaches with a heavy frown. He took pains to let it be seen that he was overcome with conflicting emotions—that stern duty summoned him from home and dear ones, but that his heart was throbbing to avenge his country's honor. They all looked toward him as if expecting a few appropriate remarks. The colonel's hands trembled, the veins upon his forehead swelled, and he seemed about to speak. Then he did.

"You don't say!" he remarked.

There was a sigh of disappointment from the ladies, and in the hiatus which followed Miss Evarts shook hands with Ralston and introduced him to the others as "the newly appointed secretary, you know." Which, or what of, she did not disclose.

"I always thought Ralston was cast for a topliner," continued the hostess, as he modestly evaded their congratulations.

"It's about time I left the chorus," answered her guest, adapting his language to Miss Evarts's open predilection for the footlights.

"Kicked your way up?" inquired, in a hoarse voice, a stout lady of stage traditions, who was clad in a wall-paper effect of gay brocade.

"My dear Mrs. Vokes, don't judge everybody by your own professional experience," remarked a young lady in brown, whose aquiline features were accounted "perfectly lovely" by a large suburban, theater-going public.

"Come! Come!" interrupted Miss Evarts loudly. "Miss Warren, order yourself more humbly before your betters."

The two popular favorites glared at one another defiantly.

"Well, in any event, Colonel Duer, he'll soon be giving you your sealed orders," said Miss Evarts, thus disposing of a situation which might have become awkward.

"Not unless the colonel gets a transfer. I'm steering the navy, not the army," laughed Ralston.

"The man behind!" murmured Mrs. Vokes.

Ralston bowed. "Very good, Mrs. Vokes," said he. "Yes, too far behind!"

"The navy, of course," Miss Evarts corrected herself, letting fall a lump of sugar and following it with an attenuated rivulet of cream. "Just a drop, as usual?"

"Did you read the President's proclamation?" asked a young girl in a gray picture hat. "Wasn't it splendid?"

"Mr. Ralston will probably write the next one," interjected another.

"No, only correct the proof," amended the hostess.

"And point it with 'Maxims'?" ventured the Vokes, now restored to complete good humor.

"Very sweet of you, Mrs. Vokes," said Ralston, recognizing the artificial dove of theatrical peace.

"You leave very soon, don't you, colonel?" asked Miss Evarts. "Is your kit-bag ready?"

"Yes, we leave by the Pennsylvania, at seven o'clock. The armory's a perfect bedlam. It looks as if every man in New York had collected all his worldly goods and chattels and dumped them on the tan bark," replied the colonel.

"The confusion must be something delightful. I suppose you have plenty of canned peaches?" inquired the brown girl innocently. "I understand that they are the staple food of heroes."

"They're certainly an indispensable stage property," admitted the colonel with something of an effort, recalling various evaporated valiants of the Cuban campaign.

During this profound discussion Ralston's eyes had been wandering from group to group, and at this moment the object of their search herself joined the party upon the other side of the table.

"Have another cup of tea, Ellen," urged Miss Evarts.

"I can't, positively, Aunt Bess," responded the girl; "I must go presently."

"How are things?" said the girl in brown, looking significantly at the colonel. "Have all your officers turned up?"

"Ye-es," he replied. "Constructively."

"Constructively?" persisted his inquisitor. "What a queer way to be present! Rather bad for an officer in a swell regiment to be dilatory, isn't it?"

"Every man has shown up," replied the rather nettled veteran, "except one, and he'll be along, all right."

"Oh, of course!" murmured the girl. "By the way, have you seen John Steadman? My cousin Fred, you know, is an officer in the same company, and he said last night at dinner that he hadn't seen him at the armory. Some one was mean enough to suggest that these ferocious military men aren't always 'warlike.'"

"There are no tin soldiers in my regiment," answered the colonel severely, turning for reënforcement to Mrs. Vokes.

Ellen Ferguson bit her lip, flashed a glance at the girl in brown and pulling her chinchilla boa into place departed with her nose in the air toward the next room. She paused for a moment to read the faded inscription, framed and hanging beneath an old cavalry saber on the opposite wall, then turning toward Ralston, raised her eyebrows inquiringly as if to ask how long he was going to occupy himself with fat old ladies and cheap actresses, and vanished. But the brown girl turned her guns on Ralston again before he could get away.

"I didn't know you had any drag at Washington," she remarked. "Who have you got on your staff—a senator or just a common garden M.C.?"

"Neither," he answered politely. "I don't know either of our senators, and I couldn't name a single congressman from the State."

"And then you have been away so long," added Miss Evarts. "Why, it's eight months, isn't it? If you ever had any pull I should think it would have faded away long ago."

"I was certainly the most surprised of all," said Ral-

ston. "I haven't a blessed qualification for the job. I suppose the fact that I've just come from the Philippines and have seen something of the Asiatic Squadron may have had a little to do with it."

"For the navy as against the army, perhaps," said the brown girl. "But it doesn't explain your getting an appointment in the first place. You must be a politician in sheep's clothing."

"Well, to be perfectly frank," answered Ralston, seeing that he was in for it, "a year ago last September, when I was shooting out at Jackson's Hole, I ran across the President and saw something of him for a week or so. I was able to help him in a matter of no importance, and you know he isn't the kind that forgets anything. He's a good fellow!"

"Just like him," commented the young lady. "Now, why didn't he give it to my brother George, who got nervous prostration making stump speeches for him at the last election?"

"Oh, I admit it's entirely undeserved, but I must plead guilty to being glad of a branch office in the White House and of a chance to be one of the boys in the conning tower," answered Ralston.

"Well, you're only an assistant secretary, anyway," said the girl. "I'm green with jealousy as it is. But aren't you sorry not to be going with your old company?"

"Don't!" he exclaimed. "You make me feel as if I belonged to the Home Guard. Honestly, I'd rather be back with the regiment, but, you see, I had served my five years ages before you were born. I ought to give the younger fellows a chance."

"I see," said the girl. "When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning at ten. I reach Washington in time to dine at the White House."

Several of the women arose and the group about the table gradually drifted away. The crowd was thinning out. Ralston, knowing very well that Ellen would be waiting for him, mumbled something to Miss Evarts and escaped.

"Well!" he exclaimed, entering the other room, and seizing her hands as she stood with her back to the fire. "Pretty good, isn't it?"

"I should say it was!" she cried delightedly. "Why, Dick, it's the chance of your life. If you make good only a little bit you may get anywhere. It's perfectly splendid! I'm so glad!"

Genuine pleasure shone in her eyes. Ralston's heart beat faster. Of course she cared for him. She must care for him. There was a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood— He stepped closer and bent his head toward hers.

"Nell—" he began.

But she apparently was not listening, and the glad look had quickly given place to another. He paused, wondering at the change. Her dark eyes, with their Oriental, upturned corners, were half veiled and her high-arched brows were contracted in a frown. He drew back and pulled out his cigarette case.

"Dick," she cried suddenly, "I want to tell you something! I'm sorry to bother you when you're so happy, and I'm so proud of you, but I'm terribly worried about something."

"Dear! Dear!" laughed Ralston, striking a match and seeing that his opportunity had somehow vanished. "What's up? Been losing at bridge?"

She smiled faintly.

"Don't make fun of me," she replied. "No, I'm really bothered." She put her hand to her forehead and pushed back her hair. "I'm afraid one of my friends isn't— Oh, I don't know how to explain it!"

A momentary suspicion flashed across his mind.

"Do you think I ought to go to the front?" he asked, relieved.

She gave a little laugh.

"You? What a goose! Of course not!"

Ralston experienced a shock of disappointment.

"What is it, then?"

"Dick," said she in quick, subdued tones, "I can't help speaking about it, and you're the best friend I've got. It's about John."

Ralston moved uneasily.

"John Steadman?"

"We're old friends, you know."

"Yes, I remember."

"I don't suppose you've seen him?"

"Not since I came back. Before that, often."

Ellen again passed her hand wearily across her forehead and turned abruptly away from the fire. The action was unconscious, involuntary. He had never associated Ellen with Steadman.

"What is it?" he asked sympathetically.

"Oh, nothing definite. Only he's been a little irregular of late. I haven't seen him for over a week. I don't think anybody has."

"He's a captain in the Twelfth, isn't he?"

"Yes. O Dick! You heard what that spiteful Warren girl said about tin soldiers?"

"Of course. Nonsense!"

"I can't help it. It's *Honor*, you know!"

"You mean you think he mayn't turn up?"

"I can't—I won't think that."

"But he hasn't?—and they're beginning to talk?"

"You heard for yourself."

"Oh, *that*!"

"Some people never live down less."

"But if he does turn up, why there's an end to it," he said.

"But why isn't he here?" she cried.

"How do I know? He may be on a business trip."

"Of course I thought of that," she replied.

"Oh, he'll be there, all right, when the time comes."

She began arranging her furs. One thing Ralston always admired about her was her care in dress. He did not know how few clothes she really had. She seemed always elegantly, if not luxuriously, clad.

They strolled slowly toward the door.

"Well," he said, "I'm awfully sorry you're upset. I'm sure he'll turn up all right. A man couldn't afford not to. Don't worry. If there was anything that I could do, no matter what, you know I'd be glad to do it for your sake, Ellen."

"Thank you, Dick. I know that," she answered.

"Well, good-by," said he. "Say good night to Miss Evarts for me, will you? I've got to run. I'm late for dinner as it is."

She gave him her hand and he held it for a moment. As he did so he looked her full in the face.

"Ellen," said he, "tell me something. Do you care about—Steadman?"

She turned her head slightly from him before reply-

ing. Then she looked back again and answered hesitatingly:

"I think—I care."

As she spoke the words she withdrew her hand. Then she flushed and her eyes brightened.

"Dick," she said slowly, in a voice that trembled a little, "I *know* I care."

The *portières* fell behind him. Mechanically he put on his overcoat and left the house, pausing for a moment at the top of the steps. A little smile hovered on his lips, but his eyes were very sad.

III

RALSTON walked as far as the Twenty-eighth Street subway station, where he caught a local for Forty-second Street. Thence he hurried to Delmonico's. It was now seven o'clock, and already the restaurant was nearly full.

"Philip, have you seen Mr. Scott?" he asked of the doorman.

"In the palm room, Mr. Ralston," answered the servant at once. "The head waiter told me to say that your dinner was ready."

Ralston checked his coat, and soon caught sight of his newly engaged private secretary at a small table in a corner. They shook hands, and Scott pointed to a pile of letters and papers beside him.

"This stuff came while you were out. I thought I'd better bring it along to save time."

"Good!" commented Ralston. "What is most of it?"

"Eight letters of congratulation, which I listed. A long letter from some old lady friend of yours when you were in Exeter——"

"I know—Mrs. Gorringe."

"Then that power of attorney from Bee, Single & Quick, that you expected. Oh, I don't know—a lot of circulars: 'Red Cross,' 'Special Relief,' 'Society for Assisting Wives and Children of Enlisted Men.' "

"Send 'em twenty-five apiece."

Mr. Scott took out his notebook and made an entry.

"How about that power of attorney?"

"It seemed all right. I don't know. We never had anything just like it in the law school."

Ralston burst out laughing.

"How old are you, Jim?"

"Twenty-five."

"Well, just wait ten years, and if you ever see a legal paper that looks like anything but a page out of Doomsday call my attention to it, will you?"

"Well, it's got a seal, anyway."

"How about those antelope heads from Livingston that were being mounted?"

"Wilcox telephoned they'd be shipped to-morrow."

By this time the soup had arrived, and both fell to with appetites born of a hard day's labor. The waiters were apparently serving "extras" with every course, and more than half the men at the tables were in uniform. Flags hung everywhere, and at each plate a *papier-maché* cannon held the customary bonbons. In the extreme eastern corner the Hungarians were playing "Dixie," "Old Kentucky Home," "Maryland," "Star-Spangled Banner," "Suwanee River," "A Hot Time," and other patriotic airs, one after the other, the conclusion of each being marked by loud applause from all sides.

"Isn't it great!" exclaimed Scott. "You know my governor thinks my going down with you is out of sight. He'd hate to have me enlist. Of course, I'd rather really, but in the long run I fancy there'll be more doin' right in Washington."

"You'll be busy, all right," said Ralston. "Has Thompson packed all the trunks?"

"Sure; ages ago."

"And did you buy the tickets?"

Scott produced the tickets with obvious pride.

"Well, you're satisfactory so far. By the way, what are you going to do to-night?"

"Mrs. Patterson's theater party—'The Martial Maid.'"

"And you skipped the dinner?"

"To dine with my chief. Orders, you know. Duty before pleasure."

"Good boy!" said Ralston. "How did you fix it?"

"Why, I spoke to Ellen and she managed it for me. Of course, if it was for you anything would go with her. Isn't she a stunner?"

"You spoke to Ellen, did you? Well, you have a confidence born of your newly acquired elevation. I saw her at Miss Evarts's this afternoon. She didn't mention you, however."

"Do you know a fellow named Steadman?" continued Scott. "Good-looking chap, but a 'weak sister,' I think."

"Yes, I know him. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. He's around with her a good deal."

"Well?"

"Well, I hate to see a girl like that throw herself away, that's all," burst out the secretary with energy.

"Why, Steadman used to be a decent fellow enough," said Ralston, thinking rapidly. "Anything the matter with him that you know of?"

"He bats an awful lot."

"Something new?"

"Yes; within six months. Uncle died and left him a lot of loose change. He's been blowing it in."

"How? Of course, it's on the quiet?"

"Oh, yes! He's at church every Sunday."

"Yesterday?"

"No. I meant metaphorically."

By eight o'clock dinner had been entirely served, and Scott had received all his instructions.

"Guess I'll step over to the Pattersons' now for a short cigar," he remarked, "and pick up the crowd. See you to-morrow at eight-thirty."

"Good night. Have a good time," called Ralston after him, as the youthful figure passed out. He was very fond of Scott. He wondered if what the boy had said about Steadman was true. A fellow could go down a lot in six months, or in less. Steadman had always had a weakness. Ralston had never liked him, though forced to be in his company on many occasions.

"I'll smoke at the room," he thought, and paid his bill. "I'm going off to Washington, William, so I'd better settle," he remarked to the old waiter.

From Delmonico's he crossed the avenue, walked north for two blocks, and turned into his rooms, which were situated in a small, new bachelor apartment house. He found everything in confusion and Thompson hard at work packing books.

He shed his frock coat for a smoking jacket, and took his seat at a low desk with a drop light, having brought his letters with him from the restaurant. First he rapidly answered his notes of congratulation, following a set form, then hastily read the power of attorney from his lawyers, and signed it, after which he O. K.'d a pile of bills, gave some instructions to Thompson about his library, wrote a long letter to his mother, who was spending the winter in Italy, then took up the letter from the

"old lady in Exeter," and threw himself back into a chair before the fire.

It was eighteen years since he had seen her, the woman who had kept the boarding house in which he had lived at school—who had mended his clothes, lent him small sums of money, brought him his meals when sick, served him for a temporary mother, lied for him when necessary, and been rewarded with the real affection of her young lodger. This was the first letter she had ever written him. In the left-hand corner of the white, blue-lined paper was an embossed reproduction of the State House in Boston, and the shaking penmanship filled every inch of space and ran back to the front page again.

DEAR RICHARD EXETER, March 5, 19—.

You must forgive an old woman calling you Richard, who worked so hard for you when you was a boy. You must be quite a man by this time to be made Secretary of the Navy as I was told by Deacon Stillwater. I am proud of you, Richard, and so is everybody here, that one of my boys should rise so high, whom I never thought of except throwing apples at Mrs. Abbott's goat and playing baseball in the middle of the street. I was hoping to hear from you that you had married some lovely young lady in New York. Don't put it off too long. If you are not going to fight you would not even have to wait until after the war. I am glad you are not going to fight and yet will serve the country. Think how long it is since I lost my dear husband at Antietam—nearly fifty years. I am an old woman, Richard, and shall not live long. I am going to leave you my chest of drawers with brass handles you used to like—you remember you used to keep chestnuts in the bottom. Be a good boy. If you can spare the time from your duties I shall be pleased to hear from you.

Your old friend,

SARAH GORRINGE.

"Dear old soul!" he sighed, staring into the fire. "What a brute I am never to have written to her after all she did for me. The good woman's reward!"

For nearly a half hour he sat thinking of his life at Exeter and of the changes time had wrought in his existence. Then he arose, carefully selected some writing materials, and wrote for some time without finishing his letter. Once he got up, crossed to the fire and studied for several minutes a photograph which stood on the mantel, after which he took a few strides around the room and returned to his task.

Twenty minutes later he laid down his pen, and taking the pile of manuscript in his lap read it over carefully. The last paragraph he reread several times. Then he placed the whole thing in an envelope and addressed it—to Exeter, New Hampshire. The little clock on the mantel pointed to half-past nine as he took off his smoking jacket and called for his coat and hat. He was tired—very tired—but something made him restless.

"I'm going to the club for a while," he said to his valet. "I'll be back in half an hour. Call a hansom."

He waited with his back to the fire, still smoking.

"Second Assistant Secretary to the Navy!" he muttered. "Not bad for thirty-four! . . . But what does it amount to? . . . What does anything amount to? . . . Who really cares? . . . It's like making the 'varsity or your senior society. . . . You always think there's some one—or that there may be some one . . ."

"Cab's here, sir," said his man.

Ralston gathered up the mail and started down the stairs. At the curb stood a hansom, the driver cloaked in a heavy waterproof. A fine rain had begun to fall, making the light from a nearby street lamp seem dim and

uncertain. As Ralston stepped toward the lamp-post to mail his letters he observed a diminutive messenger boy vainly trying to decipher the address upon a telegram, which he was holding to the light. Ralston pushed the letters into the box and closed it with a slam.

"Does Mr. Ralston live here?" asked the boy.

"Right here!" answered Ralston, holding out his hand.

"Please sign."

He scrawled an apology for a signature upon the damp page of the book and tore the end off the envelope. Then, like the boy, he held the yellow paper to the light. It bore but nine words:

Please try to find John for my sake.—E.

He read the words several times and repeated them aloud, as if in doubt as to their meaning. "Find Steadman!" Where? Find him! How? Why? . . .

The messenger boy had started away, whistling shrilly "Marching Through Georgia." Ralston wrinkled his forehead. Here was irony of Fate for you! She called upon him to save the honor of this man, whom he hardly knew, for whom he cared not a whit, whom by this time he had begun to hate, to save him—for her. He stood motionless in the rain, the telegram hanging limply from his fingers. He had not seen Steadman for nine months. Knew practically nothing of him except from clubroom gossip. And Ellen asked him to find the man for her, in the seething life of the city—find him in such a way that, wherever found, his honor would be safe, find him secretly, surely, and place him upon his feet at the head of his company before the next morning at seven o'clock.

He crumpled the paper into his pocket and turned to the waiting driver.

"Just drive down the avenue slowly."

"Yes, sir."

He climbed in and threw himself back upon the seat.

"Something of a large order, my dear young lady," he muttered. "If your attractive friend is to be found, it must be done without publicity. It would be a great deal worse to find him where he ought not to be, than not to find him at all. There are many cycles in New York's Inferno. If it were not for that, my old friend Inspector Donahue could send out a general alarm and turn him up before daylight. But that won't—no, that won't do. He's got to be located on the quiet and put into shape to march respectably off with his company.

"By George!" he exclaimed aloud, "only a woman would think of asking a chap to set out on such a wild-goose chase! But then I don't suppose she realizes. She thinks he's playing billiards at the club, or something like that, maybe!" He set his teeth.

"If she only knew!" he muttered. "Why didn't I speak a little sooner!"

"She *thought* she cared. . . . She *knew* she cared!" he whispered to himself. Then he laughed rather grimly.

And one who had happened to glance into the cab at that moment, as it passed a lamp, would have seen the gaunt face of a man smiling behind the tip of a cigar. Farther down the avenue another would have seen the same face without the cigar—without the smile.

"Jerry's!" said Ralston sharply, through the manhole.

The driver jerked the reins, wheeled his horse round abruptly, and started on a brisk trot through Forty-

fourth Street. Then turning quickly down Sixth Avenue, he brought the hansom to a sudden stop in front of a restaurant whose electric lights flared valiantly into the rain and mist.

There were three doors, but Ralston, without pausing, passed into the hostelry through the middle one. The cabman waited without orders, well aware that those who frequent Jerry's presumably desire the means of transportation therefrom. A bar ranged opposite an oyster counter gave a narrow passage to the dining room. At the end of the bar was a cashier's desk.

The after-theater crowd had not yet arrived, it was too late for dinner guests, and few tables were occupied. Ralston, however, had not expected to find Steadman there. As he reached the desk a well-built, red-cheeked Irishman stepped forward.

"How are you, Mr. Ralston? Congratulations!"

Our friend grasped the hand of the other cordially.

"How are you, Jerry?"

"You're a bit of a stranger."

"Yes. Something like a year. Been out looking over the Philippines."

"Not so good as the little old place?"

"I should say not. By the way, sit down over here a minute. I want to speak with you."

Jerry led the way to the rear of the restaurant and offered Ralston a chair. Then he drew up across the table, while the latter put him a few brief questions.

"Well, that's what I wanted," said Ralston, as they arose. "Yes, I remember now, he used to know her. I'll try it!"

"I'm afraid it's the only tip I can give you, Mr. Ralston."

"Thank you very much, Jerry. Remember, now. I haven't seen you—no matter what happens."

"Not a word!"

"Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Ralston crossed the sidewalk and sprang into the cab.

"The Moonshine—stage," said he shortly.

IV

THE party of which Ellen Ferguson was a member did not leave Sherry's until a comparatively late hour, and, while she was in no mood for gayety, anything which could fill the hours pending news of Steadman was a relief. She had found pleasure in talking to Jim Scott, that good-natured, immature, and loyal son of old Harvard, who had hardly opened his mouth the entire evening save in eulogy of his new chief. From the time they had left the house in the omnibus to the moment she had been deposited at her apartments he had not ceased his pæan of praise. Ralston was a "corker," a "crackajack," it was a great thing to be going to work with a man like that—a fellow who had done things, not one of your sit-in-the-club-window-and-have-a-little-drink style of chappies (this with a significant glance at a certain Mr. Teadle who made one of the party), but one who could use a rifle or write a book with equal skill.

Mr. Teadle saw no particular reason for Ralston's appointment? Jim supposed sarcastically that the only proper candidate *would* have been an absinthe-drinking scribbler of anæmic little poems. For a short time it looked as if Jim were going to utilize Mr. Teadle as a mop, until Ellen came to the rescue by entering into a violent flirtation with the new secretary, who furtively wondered if she really cared for that Steadman fellow, after all. Miss Ferguson, on her side, like the boy im-

mensely, but did not stop to analyze her reasons. His freshness and enthusiasm were enough to account for the attraction.

The Moonshine Theater had suggested a ludicrous parody of Brussels on the eve of Waterloo, and Scott had loudly regretted that his job did not carry a uniform with it. There were whole rows of them in the orchestra and the gallery. For a finale the chorus sang the "Star-Spangled Banner"—all up, of course, with the whole house cheering and waving hats and handkerchiefs. Tears were in Ellen's eyes as the party made their way out of the box, along the side of the house, to the entrance where the omnibus was waiting. They had piled in, and then, just as they had started—*Ralston!*

How strange that she should cross him in this fashion at such an hour! Could he have received her message? Perhaps, even now, a yellow slip was lying beneath her door marked: "Party not found." But if not on her mission, what was he doing at the stage entrance of the Moonshine?

All through the supper at Sherry's, with its martial airs, its patriotic ices and confections, its wine and laughter, she was tormented by uncertainty. If he had not received the message! Time was flying, Steadman was not being sought for, Ralston was—dallying.

Her maid removed her cloak and helped her undo her dress.

"Has anything come for me?"

"No, miss."

"Telephone to the Western Union office and ask if my telegram was delivered."

The maid disappeared, returning presently with the information that it had been receipted for at nine-thirty

"She studied the faces alternately."

o'clock. With a warm wave of relief flooding her heart Ellen slipped on a light wrapper, and threw herself into an armchair before the sea-coal fire.

"You need not wait, Elise. I shall sit up and read."

"Very well, miss. Good night."

"Good night," answered her mistress dreamily.

Outside the rain swept steadily against the glass with a soft, silting sound. From time to time drops fell down the chimney and hissed for a moment ere they vanished black splotches upon the vermilion coals. Behind her an electric lamp of bronze, with an opaque shade, threw a dim light over her shoulder and lit up the masses of her loosened hair.

Presently she arose slowly and went into an adjoining room, returning with a large photograph in either hand. They were framed alike. Placing them side by side upon the rug before her, she locked her hands across her knee, and studied the faces alternately. One was of a young man—almost a boy—with a narrow, high-bred face, dark eyes, sallow, with a mouth curved like a woman's. The other was Dick Ralston, taken about five years before, although the high cheekbones, the gaunt energy, the mature thoughtfulness suggested a man much older. That she cared for Steadman there was no doubt in her own mind. Had she refused to admit it definitely heretofore, the fact that he was now on the verge of social and moral annihilation made it no longer a matter of question. She felt that Steadman's honor was at this moment the most vital thing in her existence. He had thrown it at her feet after a long and romantic wooing. Had laid bare his entire past. She was convinced that he loved her. But at the crucial moment she had hesitated, had not responded in quite the way she had probably given him reason to

expect. She had asked for time for reflection, and could give no adequate explanation in answer to his imperative "Why?" When later he had renewed his suit she had again forced a postponement, and he had departed, annoyed and perplexed.

It was at this juncture that the money had dropped into his hands and he had disappeared. Where was he? On a shooting trip? He frankly admitted caring nothing for sport or hunting. It was not the season for travel, and his name was not upon the sailing lists. Her instinct told her that somewhere in the great city Steadman, oblivious to the call of duty, was living the life from which her influence had called him for a time, reckless of consequences, disregardful of the beckoning finger of opportunity. She knew also that this was his last chance.

She realized that she could never marry Steadman disgraced, yet she felt now that she loved him, and that could she see him and watch him start for the front with his regiment, she would promise him what he had asked.

She took Ralston's picture in her hand and held it to the light. It trembled a little. She knew she could have cared for him—but he was so stern, so strong, so capable. He had never treated her save as a sort of younger sister. She had often wondered if he cared or could care for any woman. With her he was always the same—kindly, sympathetic, obliging, thoughtful. What must he think of her, sending him forth in the dead of night to search the city for a man whom he scarcely knew? Her cheeks burned at the thought of what she had done.

She had hardly known what she was asking when she had sent the message. It had been done hurriedly, as she was leaving for the Pattersons', on the impulse of a moment when she felt that, unless John Steadman could be

found, life would cease for her to be worth living—sent in a sort of hysteria in which she instinctively turned to the one man in all the world upon whom she could call for any service she might ask. Dear old Dick! How tired he had looked in the rain! He might be up all night looking for Steadman, and then not find him! And he was to leave for Washington to-morrow.

She went to the window, against which the rain drove in a fine shower, blurring the myriad lights below her that marched in long, straight lines to north, south, and east. On the Tower the searchlight still burned steadily. She shivered and went back to the fire. Then she laid one of the pictures gently against her cheek.

V

THE Moonshine Theater blazes its defiance into the night from a gleaming Broadway promontory, whose cape divides the restless human tide that rises to its neap every evening about eleven and falls to its ebb in the neighborhood of two or three in the morning. Through its arched portals one might drive a hansom cab, and tradition says that the feat has been accomplished.

Here Mrs. Vokes, under the alias of "Hélène De-Lacy," first minced her way into popularity—but that was in the days of crinoline. The youths who loitered about its iron-bound stage entrance are gray-headed men to-day, those of them who are still alive. Only old Vincent remains, as rugged as a granite cliff, and as impervious to persuasion, bribery, or anger. "I'm sorry, gents, but it's against my orders," is said as conclusively to-night as it was twenty years ago. He got as far as:

"I'm sorry, sir, but it's against—" then changed it to a wondering: "Bless my soul, Mr. Ralston! Is it you?" as he encountered the set face of our friend.

"Why, Vincent," exclaimed the latter, "you still here? What luck! You don't look a day older!"

"I can't say the same for you, sir. I understand congratulations are in order. Oh, I read the papers. But—" he hesitated.

"But you think I'm rather old for 'Johnnying'?" in-

terpolated Ralston. "You're quite right. I am. But don't be alarmed; this is business. I want to find a young woman named Ernestine Hudson. I must see her at once. Can you fix it for me?"

"I think so," answered the guardian of the wings. "I'd do it if I lost my job. I won't forget in a hurry what you did for my little Bill. Just step——"

At that instant the door was thrust violently open and a gray-coated messenger boy, carrying a large oblong box, projected himself violently against Vincent.

"For Hudson!" he ejaculated shortly.

"Put 'em on that desk," directed Vincent.

"Say, boss, let me take 'em in," pleaded the boy.

"Who do you think you are, anyway?" inquired the doorkeeper. "Get out of here."

The boy lingered, gazing wistfully down the gas-lighted passage, through which floated the hum of the orchestra, confused by the shuffle of feet and inarticulate orders.

Vincent took a threatening step in the direction of the boy, who made a grimace at him and backed slowly through the door. Ralston smiled and looked inquiringly at the box.

"It might serve as an introduction," he suggested with a smile.

"You don't need it," said Vincent. "I guess you remember the way. Just step down the passage, and you'll find the chorus ready to go on for the second act. Hudson's the wheel horse for the partridges. She has a bunch of tail sprouts like a feather duster. What fool things the public pay to see nowadays! Why, they ain't content to let a girl be a girl, but they have to turn her into a bird, or a dress form, or a wax figger, or an automobile, or a

flower. Now take this show. It's supposed to be a kind of a 'flag-raiser.' 'Marchin' Through Georgy' and 'Campin' To-night' and all that, and the chorus is *birds*. Birds! Sparrers, canaries, and partridges!" he grunted scornfully. "Well, good luck. See you later."

Ralston walked down the passage and pushed open the skeleton canvas door that separated him from the wings. The curtain was down, and a small army of men were noisily pulling enormous flies into place by means of pulleys. One group in the center of the stage were erecting a "Port Arthur" bristling with guns, and several with wheelbarrows were bringing in a foreground of rocks, which others arranged with elaborate carelessness. Overhead hung a wilderness of ropes and drops, with sections of scenery suspended in mid-air. Two spiral staircases of iron sprang from either side and lost themselves in the tangle above. Ascending and descending were a perpetual stream of heterogeneous figures, who went up as birds and came down as village maidens, or who from grand dames of fashion were transformed into Quakeresses or drummer boys. There was loud chattering on all sides, interspersed with deep invectives from the coatless hustlers on the stage. Above all shrieked and rattled the pulleys.

The blinding light and the clouds of dust made the scene utterly confusing, and for a moment Ralston hesitated vaguely. To his left a flock of "partridges" clustered about one of the flies, while one little lady partridge sat apart on a nail keg, and eased her little partridge foot by loosening her slipper.

To the nearest Ralston turned and inquired for Miss Hudson. The girl whom he had addressed stared boldly at him, and without replying waved languidly toward the

partridge on the barrel. It was evident that she took no interest in the friends of Miss Hudson. Ralston turned, and at the same moment heard a shrill cackle from the group behind him. In spite of himself he could feel the red coursing up to his ears. The girl on the barrel had entirely removed her slipper and was stretching her toes. She did not look up at his approach, having already minutely studied his make-up under the shelter of her heavily corked eyebrows, as he emerged from the passage.

"Are you Miss Hudson?"

"Yes," said the partridge, critically examining her instep.

"My name is Ralston," he began rapidly. "I'm looking for a friend of mine, who must be turned up at once. It's a matter of life and death, and he's got to be found. I have an idea you know him."

"Have you?" said the partridge innocently.

"The man I refer to is John Steadman. Do you know where he is?"

The girl slowly lifted her head and looked at him rather impudently. She seemed more like a large doll than a girl.

"I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance, Mr. Ralston, if that is your name, and I don't know your friend Steadman."

There was something about her manner that convinced Ralston that she knew more than she admitted, but it was obvious that for purposes of her own she had made up her mind to treat him with the scant courtesy usually extended by show girls to people who are not worth while, and to people it is worth while to keep for a time at a distance.

"I'm very sorry," said Ralston. "I believed that you

were the one person in New York who could tell me where he was. Of course, you might know him under some other name."

"Why are you so interested in finding this Mr.—Steadman?" asked the partridge, studiously inserting her foot in a shoe that seemed all toe.

"Simply for his own sake."

"Don't you ever come behind for yours?" she inquired abstractedly. Ralston suppressed a smile.

"See here, young lady—" he began, changing his tactics.

"All on for the second!" shouted a big man in a Derby hat. "Here you, Hudson, stop fooling and get into your place! Clear the wings."

From behind the wall of curtain came the distant crash of the contending chords of the overture. "Port Arthur" with its rocks was in place, the Japanese flag flying defiantly in a strong current of air, generated by a frenzied electric fan held by a "super" in the moat. The chorus trooped from the flies, and came tumbling down fire escapes and staircases.

The partridge knocked her heels together and jumped lightly to her feet.

"Peep-peep!" she said. "See you later, old man. Stage door about eleven-thirty."

She nodded at him and started hopping toward the stage. The other partridges were forming in long lines, with much jostling of tail feathers and fluttering of pinions.

"Hurry up there!" shouted the assistant "stage" in Miss Hudson's direction, and then turned hastily toward the opposite flies where some mix-up had attracted his attention.

Ralston saw his last clew hopping away from him. A bell rang loudly, and the orchestra struck up the first few bars of the opening chorus. Hardly conscious of what he was doing Ralston strode quickly after the partridge and, grasping her firmly by the wings, drew her back into the flies.

"Let me go!" she gasped, struggling to free herself. "Let me go! What are you trying to do? Do you want to get me fined?"

"Keep quiet," whispered Ralston, "I've got to speak to you. Do you understand? I can't let you go on. I'll stand for any fine, and square you into the bargain. It's too late, anyway! The curtain's up already."

"Let me go!" she cried, the tears starting into her eyes. "You're hurting me, you brute! I'll lose my job. The management don't stand for this kind of thing. You're a fine gentleman, *you* are! Oh, what shall I do?"

Ralston's heart smote him. He knew well the hideous uncertainty which being out of a job means to the chorus girl, and its more hideous possibilities.

"I'm sorry," he said humbly. "I had to do it, and I promise you shall lose nothing by it. Now, quick, where can we talk? Not here? The manager would see you."

The partridge wiped her eyes.

"Do you promise to square the management?"

"I certainly do—on my honor as a gentleman."

"Then come!" Hudson darted quickly back among the scenery, and Ralston followed her down a flight of iron steps which led beneath the stage. Pipes ran in all directions, and great heaps of old flies and useless properties reached toward the low ceiling, between which narrow alleys led off into the darkness. A smell of mold and of

paint filled the air. Even the scant gas jets seemed to burn with a peculiar dimness in the damp atmosphere.

"Come along!" whistled the partridge.

Beyond a pile of lumber in a sort of catacomb she stopped. A bead of gas showed blue against some white-washed brickwork.

"Turn it up," said Hudson, and Ralston did so.

"Hungry?" she continued. "*I* could eat anything that 'didn't bite me first!'"

Ralston laughed.

"Were you in that show?" he asked. "It was a good one. No, I'm not hungry. Suppose I were?"

"This is our rathskeller," she laughed. "Are you thirsty?"

Ralston admitted to a certain degree of dryness.

"Certainly," he said, "I should like nothing better than a large schooner of dark, imported beer. What will you have?" he continued, carrying on the jest.

Hudson, who had seated herself on a low seat by the wall, got up and struck sharply on the wooden partition with a stick.

"What's that?" asked Ralston.

"Perhaps some beer will come out!" remarked the partridge. "Moses was not the only one."

A rattling followed, and a square opening appeared in the wall, in which the shaggy tow-head of a young man was visible.

He grinned at sight of Miss Hudson.

"How vas de shootink?" he inquired. "Does de bartridges vant more vet? Ha! Ha! You *vas* a bird!"

"Ya, Fritz. Two schooners and a hot dog. Hustle 'em up."

Fritz closed the slide which covered the opening and the partridge turned gayly toward Ralston.

"What do you think of that? Pretty good, eh?"

"I don't understand," he replied. "Where did he come from? What is in there?"

"I'll tell you. When 'Abe' Erlanger built this house there was a row of old tenements on the side street. Well, Jo Bimberger tore 'em down and built a rathskeller. While he was doing it one of the girls tipped off the boss carpenter to leave this place. Ain't it grand? Say, you get almost dead jumping around on the boards. It looks easy enough, but I tell you sometimes you're ready to scream."

"Just the thing," answered our friend. "Do the management object?"

"Not a bit. 'Abe' gets a rake-off from the saloon. It's good business."

The slide opened and two dripping glasses made their appearance. Ralston received them and handed one to Miss Hudson. Then Fritz passed in a frankfurter about the size of a policeman's night stick.

Ralston drew half a dollar from his pocket and exchanged it for the sausage.

"That's all right, keep the change," he remarked.

"My, you must have it to throw away!" said Hudson. "Twenty-three for you, Fritz. Shut the slide."

Ralston took a deep draught of the beer. He could not help smiling as he thought of the picture he would present could any one of his associates see him at the moment. What, for instance, would the President have said? And the Secretary of War! Underneath the stage of a theater, drinking beer with a chorus girl! He put down the glass and pulled himself together.

"Now to business!" he exclaimed. "This is jolly good fun, but I've a long night in front of me, and I've got work to do in it. Where is Steadman?"

The partridge looked at him inquiringly.

"You don't mean you really are trying to find anyone?"

"Certainly I do."

"Steadman?"

"Yes."

She shrugged her shoulders. It was clear, even to Ralston, that she was disappointed.

"I can't help you."

"You *know* him?" Ralston's gaze penetrated her feathers.

"Yes. But I don't know where he is—and what is more, I don't care. He's a cad."

"Well, let it go at that. But I've got to find him. How long is it since you've seen him?"

"Three weeks."

"What was he up to?"

"Oh, the usual business. He's badly in. Let him go; he's not worth your while."

"I didn't say he was. But he must be turned up. Was he drinking?"

"Yes!"

"Ah!" Ralston scowled.

"He's a bad one," continued the partridge. "He began at the bottom and worked down."

"You must help me to find him. Who is he running with?"

"I don't know anything about him. I've heard he knows a girl named Florence Davenport. If you can find her she might help you."

"Where does she live?"

"On Forty-sixth Street," and she gave him a number.

Ralston arose and put his hand in his pocket.

"I am very much indebted to you," he said courteously. "You won't mind if I make good your fine?"

He drew out a bill and placed it in her hand. She raised her eyebrows at sight of its denomination.

"No," she said, "I haven't done anything for you. I don't want the money."

"But your fine?"

"That's all right," she replied, shrugging her shoulders. "I could have gone on—if I'd wanted to. I was merely bluffing. You couldn't have held me. You're a gentleman, and I don't want the money." She spoke quietly, and looked him full in the face. Ralston wavered.

"Please don't," said the girl, and held out the bill. Ralston took it and returned it to his pocket.

"Miss Hudson," said he, "you have placed me under a great obligation, one that money cannot repay. If I can ever help you in any way let me know."

The partridge got up and led the way toward the staircase. At the top she held out her hand and Ralston took it in his.

"He's not worth it," she repeated. "Let him go."

"*Noblesse oblige*," he smiled, looking down at her.

The chorus had filed off the stage and were standing on the other side.

"Here you, Hudson! Where have you been?" whispered the manager hoarsely, grasping her roughly by the shoulder. "Get over there."

"Leave me alone!" she cried sharply, shaking off his arm. Then, turning to Ralston:

"Good night, sir," she said.

VI

OUTSIDE the Moonshine Ralston found the usual congestion of cabs, lan aus, and wagons. He had delayed to exchange a few reminiscences with old Vincent, and it was fully ten minutes before he could find his cabby in the tangle of vehicles. As he stepped into the street, to save the time requisite for the man to draw to the curb, an omnibus was vainly trying to force its way through the side street. It had paused for an instant in front of the stage entrance, and Ralston had caught a glimpse of Ellen's face inside.

A momentary impulse had seized him to stop the coach and tell her of the hopelessness of the task upon which she had sent him, but in the instant of his uncertainty the way had cleared and they had driven on. He had climbed into his own hansom, little the wiser for his experience at the Moonshine.

The sidewalks were jammed with the usual after-theater crowd hurrying either to get home as quickly as possible or to secure seats in restaurants which pandered less to the taste of the *gourmet* than to those of the *roué*. For a solid mile on either side of Broadway stretched house after house of entertainment, any one of which could harbor a hundred Steadmans, and for a quarter of a mile on either hand lay twenty streets, lined with places of a character vastly more likely to do so. He followed the crowd slowly northward, wondering why so few of

them walked in the opposite direction. Whenever he came to a well-known hostelry he went in and eagerly scanned the tables, but, although he recognized many he knew and who knew him, he found naught of Steadman.

Having visited five "chophouses," a "rathskeller," two "hofbraus," and several more pretentious places, he abandoned the idea of trying to stumble upon his man, and returned to his original belief that only by following some sort of a clew could he succeed. Somewhere in the hot clasp of the city lay the miserable youth he had promised to find. For a moment he regretted the answer which he had just sent to Ellen's apartment—the four words that had pledged him to a fool's errand, the absurdity of which was now apparent. Then came a realizing sense of the importance to Ellen of his mission, and a grim determination to find this man wherever he might be.

He had now reached Forty-second Street, and the crowd divided into two streams, one moving eastward and the other northward, a part of the latter to plunge beneath the Times Building into the subway, and the remainder to add to the already existing congestion in front of the Hotel Astor, Rector's, Shanley's, and the New York Theater. Longacre Square boiled with life —a life garish, tawdry, sensual and vulgar, unlike that of any other city or generation.

The restaurants could seat no more, and a bejeweled, scented throng stood in the doorways and struggled for the vacant tables. The night hawks lining the curb peered eagerly at every passer-by to note signs of intoxication or indecision. Tiny newsboys thrust their bundles of papers against dress waistcoats and felt for loose

watches, ready to dart into the throng at the first move of suspicion on the part of their victims. Clerks with their best girls pointed out these and made witticisms upon them, hoping thus to divert attention from the attractions of the restaurants, for whose splendors they intended later to substitute the more substantial, if more economical, pleasures of the dairy lunch. Automobiles, in which sat supercilious foreign chauffeurs, blocked the entrances of the pleasure palaces. Streams of country folk poured in and out of hotels which made a specialty of rural trade, promising to their patrons, in widely distributed circulars, easy access to everything "worth seeing." These came, were relieved of their money, and, after fervid correspondence on the hotel stationery, went home to poison the minds of their townfolk with descriptions of scenes which existed only in their imaginations.

For every person on Longacre Square after midnight who is there for an honest purpose, there are three who are there either to do that which they should not do or to see that which they should not see. It is the white light in which the New York moth plays before he plunges into the withering flame. It was here Steadman had begun, and like enough he was not far off.

The electric clock above the roof tops moved to a quarter before one as Ralston turned into Forty-sixth Street, and he looked both ways before springing from his hansom and dashing up the steps of the number to which he had been directed. After some time a mulatto maid opened the door and asked his business. Miss Davenport was out, she said. Ralston stretched the truth far enough to say that he was a friend. The girl had no idea where she could be found. Then Ralston also volun-

teered that he was a friend of Mr. Steadman's. Still the maid remained imperturbable. The sight of a bill, however, led to an immediate change of demeanor.

Yes, Miss Davenport had gone out with a gentleman —not Mr. Steadman—early in the evening. Did she know Mr. Steadman? Yes, she thought she knew Mr. Steadman—a dark gentleman. She seemed anxious to help Ralston, but doubtful of success.

As was not unreasonable, Ralston was beginning to be quite disgusted at the position in which he found himself, a condition which was by no means relieved by the fact that, as he reached the bottom of the steps, he found himself face to face with Colonel Duer and a somewhat elderly lady companion. The new Assistant Secretary felt distinctly uncomfortable. Another man might have turned away his face, but Ralston looked steadily into the colonel's under the full light of the street lamp. Simultaneously he raised his hand to his hat, then crossed the sidewalk and jumped into the hansom. The cabby lifted the manhole and looked down the air shaft.

"Huh?" said he. "Where'll I go now?"

"I don't know," said Ralston.

The cabby chuckled. He was satisfied one way quite as well as another. From his seat of vantage he was able to look down critically upon mankind in general, and had learned to distinguish "the real thing" when he saw it. He had no doubts as to Ralston, and no misgivings at all as to the latter's ability to pay and pay well, and he was as confident that his tip would be in accordance with the most advanced ideas of liberality as he was that this same fare of his was quite out of the ordinary. He had sized Ralston for a thoroughbred from the moment that he had come downstairs. For one thing he did not waste words,

for another he neither looked at his watch nor inquired the price; for another—and you could always tell by that—he knew just what he was doing. Moreover, he was perfectly sober. He belonged to that small and distinguished body of midnight travelers who realize that they are in a cab and not in a hammock. Hence Ralston's admission that he did not know where to go to next struck upon the cabby intelligence in the light of a joke.

"Huh?" said he again, removing his cigar.

"I said I didn't know," repeated Ralston.

"Up against it!" said cabby with divination.

"Exactly," returned his fare with a slight laugh. "You are a man of perspicacity."

"Huh?" repeated the cabby.

"I said you were a mind reader," answered Ralston.

"I guess I can see furder'n most," admitted cabby complacently.

Ralston had struck a match and lit a fresh cigar. He was feeling very, very tired. His watch showed that there were exactly six hours left before the Twelfth would start—not a minute more.

The cabby was still peering down the manhole and dropping an occasional sympathetic ash on Ralston's silk hat. His fare interested him—he was beginning to have a notion that Ralston was somebody. Maybe a big military gun. He had that clean, hard look those fellers have.

Suddenly the fare spoke again, in an even more amiable tone than before.

"My friend, how long have you been in this business?"

The cabby hesitated while he made an accurate mathematical computation.

"Five years on a percentage—ten years on my own—fifteen years, sir."

"You know the town pretty well, eh?"

"Fairly well, sir."

"Is there a *café* somewhere a bit out of the way—something quiet, you know?"

"Sure, across the square. Shall I drive you there?"

"Yes."

The cabby clucked to his horse, and they wheeled about and crossed the White Way again. The pedestrians were thinning out. The rain had ceased, the clouds had parted, and the sky was sprinkled with brightly burning stars. Up in the Times Tower the afternoon before one of the editorial writers had polished up a "war-whoop" such as, he had said to himself, would make the Japanese emperor scratch his head. It was a half-column "drip" in the nature of a "Godspeed" to the first volunteer regiment to start for the front. He liked the Twelfth, and had been in it himself under Ralston. The thought had reminded him that he ought to give his old captain a bit of a send-off as well, and he had penned a dozen lines to be inserted after the other, and headed "A Wise Appointment," ending his short paragraph with the words: "The nation is to be sincerely congratulated on the wisdom of the Executive's selection."

Twenty-five stories below, the subject of his encomium was now entering the side door of a shabby *café*, followed by his cabby. They seated themselves at a table in the corner of the sawdust-covered floor.

"The situation is this," began Ralston, after the waiter had picked up his tip and retired. "I must, inside of six hours, turn up a man who is somewhere in the city. He doesn't know enough to want to be found. He must be

located without outside help—quietly. The only clew I have to his whereabouts is that he knows a young woman named Florence Davenport. She lives in that house we stopped at. She has gone out with a man named Sullivan. I don't know the fellow, but the chances are he won't help me. But whether he will or not, I don't know where he is, and I must find him in order to find her."

He looked at the cabby inquiringly.

"I know him, all right," said the cabby. "A big 'harp' with a sandy mustache. I know her, too. I took 'em both out this very night."

"Took them out!" exclaimed Ralston. "Why, in Heaven's name, didn't you say so before!" Then he remembered and laughed at the absurdity of his question. The fatigue of a severe day was dissipated in a moment.

"Sure," continued the cabby, "I took 'em out just before I answered your call. She uses the same stable."

"Where did they go?"

"Proctor's."

"Where do you suppose they are now?"

"You can search me!" responded the cabby, now thoroughly interested. "The chances are about even between Shanley's and the Martin, but you tried Shanley's. Better hike right down to the other place."

Ralston started swiftly to his feet, made his way to the cab, and in a moment more they were galloping down Broadway.

The electric timepiece on the roofs marked four minutes past one as they rattled past. What people were still awake were most of them inside the shining windows of the restaurants, and the big porters were leaning sleepily against the doorposts of their hostelries. In the

cab Ralston wondered what the President would say if he could see him then, chasing all over the town after a young woman and her male escort. He was dreadfully sleepy, and the cushions of the cab were so soft—soft—sof——

He pulled himself together as the cab reined up sharply at the Twenty-sixth Street entrance of the Café Martin. His driver did not need to be told to wait, and Ralston hurriedly pushed his way through the revolving doors into the hot, scented air of the waiting hall. If it was late on Broadway, it was early enough inside the Martin.

On the right, in a crowded *café*, two hundred soldier boys and civilians with their sweethearts sat noisily discussing broiled lobsters, Welsh rarebits, caviare sandwiches, and such less important matters as were suggested by the last news from Washington. The air reeked with the fumes of hot food, cigarette smoke, and steam heat. When the side door opened, and the draught pulled through from the main dining room, one caught a whiff of rice powder and violets. The chatter and clatter were deafening.

To Ralston the chances seemed in favor of the other and more conspicuous company in the front room, so he turned back and crossed the hall. At the door of the main dining room he paused. At fully eighteen out of the twenty-five tables which were presented to his view sat an equal number of young women who might have qualified as Miss Florence Davenport. There was more room here, the music was louder, and the men had on either uniforms or evening dress. The confusion was even greater than in the *café*, due to the greater amount of light and music and the variation of color. Here and

there at the larger tables sat groups of officers, indulging in pompous patriotic toasts.

Ralston moved toward the center of the room, eagerly scanning the tables in search of a blond man with a light mustache, but he saw none to correspond with the cabby's description. Then from behind him he heard his name called, and he turned to be greeted by a chorus of congratulatory welcome from a party of his old comrades of the Twelfth, who crowded around him, drew him into a chair and ordered more bottles.

Ralston protested but feebly. He was out of sorts with the whole miserable business.

"Here's to you, old man!" exclaimed Peyton, one of Duer's lieutenants. "Boys, here's to the next Secretary of the Navy, and then, who knows—well, here's to Dick Ralston, the best ever—bumpers!"

"Fellows," answered Ralston, "it's very good of you. It's very good of the President. I hope I'll do him credit, but the best any of us can do is the right way as each of us sees it at the moment—and no one knows where it may lead us. Here's to being on the level—here's to the right way and the *white* way!" He started to drink off the toast when a man's head and shoulders arose behind Peyton, and a thick voice cried:

"That for mine! Th' White Way—th' Great White Way!" and he raised a goblet and drained it. The men in the group laughed, and the laugh was echoed from several of the tables. As the fellow stumbled back into his seat Ralston realized suddenly that he had found his man. A red face and a blond mustache! The elusive Sullivan at last!

For a moment our hero chatted animatedly with his friends, while taking note of the position of the table at

which the fellow sat. As yet he could not see whether Sullivan had a companion, for the table was in a recess and behind a stand of artificial palms. Then he leaned across the shoulder of the man next him and caught sight of a gray silk dress and a rose-trimmed hat. Who the lady was it was impossible for him to discover, as her head was completely hidden by the paper foliage toward which her companion was bending. They were, apparently, by no means near the end of their supper, so that there was time to consider the situation and to decide upon a course of action. But the situation itself was a novel one to Ralston.

Now the mere accosting of a young lady in a public restaurant is not a very serious matter, even if she be accompanied by a male escort, so long as the matter be done decently and in order. But to suddenly burst upon a *tête-à-tête* couple from behind a bunch of palms, and demand what has been done with a young man, especially if it be nearly three in the morning, is somewhat different. One mistaken move, and the search would have to be abandoned. How was he to introduce himself to a strange woman and compel her to divulge information which she might have no intention of disclosing, and how, moreover, could this be accomplished in the presence of a person of the type of Mr. Sullivan? He had no claim on either of them. Even assuming that the bounder did not object to his having speech with the lady, it was unlikely that she would admit any intimacy with Steadman in the presence of her companion. No, he must speak to the girl by herself—that was clear enough. But how? Obviously, he could not invite her escort to step out into the next room for a few moments. Neither was it at all likely that she would accede to any request of his (carried by a waiter)

either to speak to him or to get rid of her companion. Again he was, in the vernacular, "up against it" as his cabby had suggested on a previous occasion.

Meantime the moments were slipping by, with Ralston trying hard to keep up his end of the conversation. Ten minutes more, and he had determined definitely that there was no course open but to trust to the girl herself for a solution. All he could do was to throw his hand down, face up, before her, and let her decide. In the event of his request being ignored, he must face it boldly out with both of them.

Borrowing a pencil he wrote upon his visiting card: "Miss Davenport will place the writer under the greatest possible obligation by allowing him to speak to her privately upon a matter of the utmost importance. He is in civilian dress at the next table." Underneath his name he wrote: "Second Assistant Secretary of the Navy." Summoning the head waiter he instructed the latter to carry it to the lady behind the palm in such a manner that it should be unobserved by her companion.

He felt instantly relieved—the relief the rider feels the moment he has decided to take the jump and his horse rises beneath him. He plunged anew into the banter going on about him. He saw, out of the corner of his eye, his messenger circle the room, approach the couple from the other side, address Mr. Sullivan, call his attention to something behind him, and slip the card into his companion's lap. Then the attendant moved on.

Several moments passed. He began to feel that nothing had been accomplished when there came a crash of glass, the palm rocked, and the lady in some confusion sprang to her feet, shaking her dress. Her escort arose more slowly, cursing the nearest waiters in a comprehen-

sive manner. The hubbub in the restaurant ceased momentarily, but quickly began again as the manager and his aids hurried forward to offer their assistance.

They had hard work to appease Mr. Sullivan, however. He wanted to see the proprietor, and insisted loudly, although irrelevantly, that he was an "American gentleman." The table was righted, and the head waiter promised that a second supper should be instantly forthcoming, but Sullivan remained in a state of defiance. He insisted on seeing "Monseer Martin"—"my fren' Monseer Martin," and called loudly for a "garsoon" to take him there.

Apparently the lady herself was indignant, and was not at all averse to having her escort see his "fren' Monseer Martin." Then, with his head high in air like a red harvest moon, the rampant Sullivan made his way toward the main door of the dining room, followed by the apologetic and deprecatory head waiter.

As the two passed out Ralston arose.

"Going?" inquired Peyton.

"Not very far. I'll be right back," replied our friend.

The others watched him curiously.

In a moment he was behind the palm, and had sunk into Sullivan's vacant seat.

"How d'y do, Mr. Second Assistant Secretary of the Navy?" remarked the young woman nonchalantly. "Glad to know you. Rather a noisy introduction, eh?"

"I'm surprised you thought it worth while," answered Ralston. "Our friend has probably polished off Martin by this time, and is already on his way back. Then he'll be ready to polish off *me!*"

"I guess you're able to take care of yourself, all right," replied the girl. "What is it you want?"

"I don't know that it's wise for me to tell you on this short acquaintance."

"Short? Yes. I suppose it is. But, you see, I know *you*. And if I can help Mr. Ralston, why I *will*."

"Thank you," said Ralston. The words sounded entirely *malapropos* and inadequate. "Tell me, then—tell me where to find John Steadman."

Instantly the girl's whole manner changed and she drew back.

"Steadman!" she exclaimed uneasily.

"Yes, Steadman! John Steadman. I must find him *to-night!*"

"You can't!" she cried in some agitation. "You can't. I've no business to tell you even that, but you *can't*."

Ralston's face settled into a grim mask.

"I *will!*" he answered steadily. "And you're going to help me."

"I can't, Mr. Ralston. I can't. I don't know where he is."

Ralston's heart fell again.

"But you can *help* me?" he asked.

"I can't. I swear I can't," she replied almost hysterically, and Ralston could see that she was speaking the truth.

"Tell me," he said, "tell me, and I'll give you anything you ask—does *Sullivan* know?"

As he spoke the girl's face turned pale under the electric light. She nodded her head slightly, while at the same moment a thick hand descended on Ralston's shoulder and a heavy, wine-laden voice growled in his ear:

"Whatcher doin' in my seat?"

Ralston sprang to his feet and shook off the hand.

"Whatcher doin' talkin' to this lady?" inquired the other, his eyes blazing with anger. His voice rang loudly above the roar of conversation.

"Miss Davenport is a friend of mine," replied Ralston as quietly as he could.

"Frien' nothin'!" cried Sullivan. "I'll teach you to mind your own business." He took a step backward and began to pull off his dinner jacket.

"Don't, Jim!" cried the girl. "Don't! Please! Please don't!"

"Shut up!" snarled Sullivan. "I'll attend to you later!"

There was a great uproar in the restaurant. At the same instant Sullivan led heavily at Ralston's head. Almost automatically, with every ounce of his body at the end of an arm trained into a steel rod, Ralston ducked and countered. His fist caught Sullivan squarely on the chin, and the man went down and backward like a duck shot on the wing. His head struck on a corner of the table, and he lay motionless.

The next instant Ralston was the center of an excited, jostling crowd. Peyton had his arm around him and was whispering: "Get out quick, old man. Awfully unfortunate. Get out while there's time."

"Some one ring for an ambulance!" shouted a civilian at a nearby table.

"Is there a doctor here?" inquired the head waiter mechanically, hurrying toward the door.

Ralston's head reeled. The President's latest appointee mixed up in a drunken brawl at a public hostelry! Worse than that, if possible, he had, perhaps, killed the only man who knew where Steadman could be found. It had all happened so quickly that he saw it like the scenes

of a vitagraph, with little twinkles of light glinting all about. Then a girl's voice whispered in his ear:

"Get away! You mustn't be mixed up in this. Get away while you can!"

Somebody began to fling water in Sullivan's face and to rip off his collar. The crowd forced itself almost upon the prostrate man. "Get away," he heard Peyton repeating. "Don't be a fool! Think of the Administration!"

Men were climbing upon tables to see what was going on. There was a deafening hubbub from the main hall, into which the crowd from the other room was pouring. Ralston was thinking as quickly as he could. He saw his whole public career shattered by a single blow. He saw Ellen's anxious face and heard her words: "Please find Steadman." He ground his teeth. The only clew to Steadman lay like a log before him, struck down by his own hand.

Some one in the back of the room shouted: "Send for the police—a man has been shot!" and he heard the silly cry repeated in the outer corridor. Less than half a minute had passed, but to Ralston it had already seemed twenty, when he decided upon the only course Fate had left open to him.

How he managed to do it he never really knew. Afterwards it appeared absurdly impossible, but Peyton said that at the time it seemed reasonable enough. There had been a moment when, in the confusion, the crowd had blocked its own efforts to get closer, a moment when no one apparently had known what to do, a moment which Ralston, in his businesslike and rather autocratic fashion, had turned to his own advantage.

A hurried whisper to Peyton, and with the help of one of their brother officers they had raised Sullivan from the

floor and, followed by the girl, had carried him to the Fifth Avenue entrance. "Keep back the crowd!" Peyton had cried to the head waiter. "We must give this man air," and in a moment more they had staggered with Sullivan's limp form to the ever-ready hansom, which had wheeled quickly to their assistance, and shoved him in.

In another moment there had appeared around the corner of the building a throng of men and women in evening dress, among whom were mingled waiters, pedestrians, and cabmen.

"To the hospital!" cried Ralston, and pushing in the girl, sprang after her himself. The cabman cut furiously at his horse, the bystanders parted, and the hansom leaped forward like a chariot in a Roman amphitheater, with Ralston, who had snatched the reins from above his head, guiding the excited animal down Fifth Avenue.

A policeman made an ineffectual attempt to stop them at Twenty-third Street, but quickly stepped aside to avoid being run down.

"Hully gee!" shouted the cabman inconsequently, "Hully gee!" while the girl, staring abstractedly at the motionless face beside her, murmured excitedly, "A clean get-away! A clean get-away!"

VII

THEY turned west at Eighth Street and crossed Sixth Avenue at a slow trot. Ralston had surrendered the reins to the driver and was now racking his brains for a solution of his extraordinary and sensational predicament. The girl had taken Sullivan's motionless head into her lap.

"Where to, sir?" inquired the cabby through the manhole.

"I don't know," answered Ralston. "Lose us if you can, that's all. Lose us so we won't be able to find our own way back."

They continued west, following narrow, dimly lit streets, under the shadow of high warehouses. Sullivan had given as yet no sign of life and the girl had not spoken since Twenty-third Street. The strain of the situation began to tell.

"Well, what are we going to do now?" inquired Ralston with an attempt at jocularity. The girl did not reply, and as he heard her sobbing softly a pang of remorse touched him. What business had he to force this young woman into being an accessory after the fact in what might be heralded as a crime?

"Miss Davenport," he said, "I'm awfully sorry to have dragged you into this. Indeed, I am. Let me drive you home. I'll look after Sullivan, and if necessary take him to a hospital."

"And leave you to stick this out by yourself? Not on your life!" she replied. "It's a bad mix-up, but we've got to pull it off somehow. But first we've got to do something for Jim. Look, there's a drug store over there and a night light."

"But that won't do," expostulated Ralston. "We never could explain to the officer on post. We'll have to go somewhere else. You know about these things. Where?"

"Yes, yes—I know."

"Well, quickly!"

The cabman was peering down through the manhole.

"Do you know Commerce Street?" asked the girl.

"Sure I do," said the cabby.

"Well, go to No. 589."

The cabman jerked around his horse. They were in Greenwich Village now, and not far from the old New York Central freight depot. Trim little brick houses with white portals and tiny eves lined the streets. Slender lanes led away into black distances. The night was silent save for the rush and roar of the elevated and the clack of their own horse's hoofs. Not a window was agleam. In this respectable neighborhood folks went to bed betimes, and got up early.

The cool night air soothed Ralston's nerves, but with it he felt limp and tired. The excitement at the restaurant, the wild dash down Fifth Avenue, the presence with them of a man who might perhaps be dead, the fear of pursuit, the extraordinary situation in which he, a man of so much recent prominence, found himself, the strange way in which this girl had become a partner in his fortunes, dazed and bewildered him.

"He can't be dead," muttered Ralston. "He can't be dead!"

The cab turned into a little street lined with irregularly shaped houses. A few gnarled and distorted trees, whose trunks burst out of the concrete pavement, raised their dust-laden branches, prehensile and unnatural, into the starlight. A hundred feet from where the street began it turned sharply to the left, forming a right angle, and debouched again into another thoroughfare. Had one of the ends of it been closed it would have formed a natural *cul-de-sac*—an appendix to one of the great canals of the city. And with curious impropriety the city fathers had named this "accidental" Commerce Street, leaving it to the imagination as to what sort of commerce had been intended. A rickety gas lamp leaned dangerously toward a flight of high wooden steps in the angle of the street. Strangely enough, when the street turned the house turned, too, so that half its front faced north and half east. The natural inference was that the inside of the house was shaped like a piece of pie, with its partially bitten point abutting on the corner.

Ralston took charge of Sullivan and the girl sprang down and stepped into the area. Somewhere at a great distance a bell rang once, and then, more faintly, a second time. They waited in silence. On the main thoroughfare beyond the gnarled trees a policeman slowly sauntered across the street. At the top of one of the opposite houses a window was raised cautiously and voices could be heard whispering. Again the bell jangled loosely in the distance, then came the sound of iron bars rattling and bolts being shot back. A grating creaked rustily.

"It's me—Floss. Let me in."

The girl ran back to the cab and a match flared in the

grating. Ralston thought he saw a wrinkled face behind the light.

"All right. Bring him in," said the girl.

Ralston and the cabman lifted the lank form of Sullivan to the sidewalk and half carried, half dragged him into the area. At their feet lay a small flight of steps upon which played a feeble light from the inside. Down this they pulled the victim of Ralston's strange quest. A passage opened before them, in the middle of which stood a tiny, wrinkled Jewish woman, who watched them with snapping, restless eyes, like those of a blackbird.

The girl pushed by them and, taking the candle from the woman, opened a door leading to the right. The air was close and unwholesome. A bed with only a mattress covering the springs stood in the corner, and upon this Ralston and the cabman placed the still unconscious form of Mr. Sullivan.

"That'll do for the present," said the girl. "Now you" (addressing the cabman) "wait outside. If the cop asks what you are doin', you're waiting for a fare in another house, see?"

The cabman retired, and the Jewish woman lit a kerosene lamp. The girl disappeared and returned with a wet sponge and a bottle of ammonia. She now opened Sullivan's shirt and sponged his face with perfect confidence. Then she poured some ammonia upon the sponge and applied it to his nostrils. Ralston, leaning over the bed, coughed in spite of himself.

Sullivan opened his eyes a little; the girl removed the sponge and put her head close to his face.

"He's breathing—he'll come round all right," she said. "He stays 'out' an awful long time."

She gave him the ammonia again and the patient

gasped audibly. Ralston heaved a great sigh of relief. Although he had known himself to be absolutely in the right he was aware that this body-snatching was, to say the least, irregular. Had the fellow died it would have made a nasty story for the papers. He sank back on a horsehair rocking chair and the room grew black with little pricking stars. The next moment he felt the sponge thrust in his face.

"You're almost out yourself, Mr. Ralston. I'll have a cup of coffee ready for you in a minute. Lie down on the sofa."

Ralston indeed felt sick and faint, the lids of his eyes seemed like lead, pulled down by invisible but powerful strings. The man was not dead! But Steadman—he'd think of Steadman in a moment, after he had rested his eyes a little——

He leaned back his head—and slept. A light touch on his forehead awakened him half an hour later, and he opened his eyes upon a strange picture. The room was stuffy and warm as ever. The lamp cast but an uncertain light on the walls, which, he noticed, were quite bare of ornament. Over the windows were heavy wooden shutters, bolted on the inside. On the bed lay Sullivan, breathing heavily. The floor was covered by a dirty rag carpet, and the only articles of furniture besides the bed itself were a horsehair-covered lounge, a small table, and two horsehair-covered chairs, and in the midst of these uncouth surroundings stood a girl in shimmering evening dress, her white shoulders shining in the lamplight, offering him a cup of hot and fragrant coffee.

"You're a brick," said Ralston feebly.

The girl smiled.

"Kind of funny, ain't it? To think of you and me

and him "—she pointed over her shoulder—"being here. What a rumpus the police'll make when they can't find him at any hospital. It's a queer mix-up, now, ain't it?"

"I should say it *was!*" echoed Ralston. He gulped down the coffee. "Do you live here?" he asked, sweeping the room again with his eyes. The girl smiled.

"Not generally," she said.

"But this house—whose is it?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"They've never been able to find out at the tax office," she said.

"You're a good girl," said Ralston inconsequently.

The smile on the girl's face changed. She started to speak. Then she closed her eyes and covered them with her hands.

The figure in the bed gave vent to a long-drawn-out snort and tossed heavily. The girl dabbed her eyes with her wrists and turned with an anxious look.

"He's waking up," she whispered. "He'll be crazy when he sees you here."

"But I brought him here," said Ralston, "and it was his own fault. Besides, he is going to find Steadman for me."

"Find Steadman for you?" she exclaimed.

"Why, certainly! Why not?"

The girl looked at him in amazement.

"And that's why you carried him off?"

"Yes—naturally—of course. What did you think?"

She gave a low laugh and clapped her hands softly together.

"And I thought all along it was just to get yourself out of the mess you were in—to avoid the publicity and all. I didn't see your game. I thought it was all up for

you—and the best you could do was to get out of having to go to court! But they can't count you out, can they? My, you *have* got a nerve!" she finished enthusiastically.

Ralston shrugged his shoulders.

"I assure you it wasn't as clearly thought out as all that. It was like clutching at whatever was left. Sullivan's my only clew. How can I force a statement from this fellow? What has he done? What hold can I get on him?"

The girl looked at him half frightened yet full of admiration.

"Don't try it, Mr. Ralston," she whispered. "Give it up. You can't do it. It's too late. Besides, Sullivan's a dangerous man—a man who stands in with all the politicians—a bad fellow to threaten. He's done things enough, God knows, to send him to jail a dozen times—but leave him alone! You've done enough for Steadman. If you try to monkey with Sullivan *anything* might happen to you. You mightn't leave this house alive. Get away before it's too late. You're probably due in Washington about now. This night's work will blow over, and Steadman isn't worth the powder to blow his brains out." She clasped her hands with a gesture of entreaty.

"No," said Ralston. "I've begun, and I must finish the job. I mightn't have gone into it if I had known what it was going to cost, but it's too late to back out now. Besides, I've nothing to lose. I'm done for. This 'Martin' business would kill the Administration if I didn't resign. In fact, the public need never know that I have accepted. Fancy! The police looking for the Second Assistant Secretary of the Navy as a fugitive from justice! Why, the papers will be full of it. But

that doesn't help me with Steadman. I've got to force this fellow here to give up. Tell me something to use as a lever."

The man on the bed groaned loudly and elevated one knee high in the air. The girl hesitated, evidently torn between various conflicting claims of loyalty.

"Tell him," she whispered after a moment—"tell him you know all about Shackleton and the Mercantile bonds. If that isn't enough, say you'll hand him over for the Masterson deal—that'll fetch him, but be careful and don't get him angry. He may not know where Steadman is, after all. But I heard him say that the gang had almost finished trimming Steadman and were going to finish him up to-night—at cards I think. They've gotten almost every cent he has already——"

Sullivan gave a harsh cough and arose to a sitting position.

"Shackleton—Mercantile bonds—Masterson deal," murmured Ralston to himself.

"Huh! That you, Floss?" grunted Sullivan. "What are we doin' here? Where's the old woman?"

"Sh-h! It's all right, Jim," said the girl. "We made a clean get-away. You came near running in the lot of us."

"Whatcher talking about?" mumbled Sullivan. "'Bout 'getaways'?" Then he caught sight of Ralston. "Who's this feller?"

"All right, Mr. Sullivan, I'm a friend of yours," said Ralston quietly.

Sullivan looked fixedly at him for a moment without speaking.

"I've seen you before," he muttered. "Somewheres."

"Sure," said Ralston with a laugh. "You tried to do me up at 'The Martin' not over an hour ago."

Sullivan glared at him.

"You that feller?"

"I am."

"Whatcher doin' here?"

"Same thing I was going to do at 'The Martin' if you'd given me the chance—have a talk with you."

Sullivan looked puzzled and rubbed the back of his head. He had none of the resplendency of his earlier appearance.

"Must ha' fallen an' hit my head," said he in an explanatory manner. "Say, did anyone *club* me?"

"No," said Ralston. "But you got a pretty rough deal."

"Say," repeated Sullivan, "how'd you come to bring me to the old woman's?"

"I had to take you somewhere," said Ralston. There was a pause of several seconds, during which Sullivan endeavored to readjust himself.

"What's yer name?" he inquired.

"Sackett," said Ralston.

"Sackett," repeated Sullivan. "I don't know Sackett. What's yer business?"

"Oh, I'm a detective," answered Ralston lightly.

Sullivan started and clutched at the mattress.

"Detective!" he muttered. "What d'yer want?"

"I don't want anything," said Ralston. "I know quite a lot about you, Mr. Sullivan, but it stays where it is. All I want is a little help."

"You go to hell!" growled Sullivan.

"No—no!" replied Ralston. "Not yet. I want you to tell me where I can find Steadman. You see, his folks are anxious, and it's worth quite a little to me to locate him. It needn't interfere with any of your

plans. Besides, I imagine you're about through with him, eh?"

The color returned to Sullivan's face and he snarled angrily.

"None of that to me, see? I am on to you, understand? You'd better get out of here, while you're still able."

The girl, who had remained silent, now spoke again:

"Be careful, Jim; this man can make trouble for us."

Sullivan looked sharply at her, but evidently nothing about her appearance or speech excited his suspicions.

"Mr. Sullivan," continued Ralston from his seat in the horsehair rocker, "I don't mean you any harm. In fact, I can do you a good turn now and then if you'll help me out. All I want is my coin for turning up this chap Steadman. I know he's no good. He's anybody's money. He's nothing to me. But it's all in my day's work. Now, don't think me disagreeable. I want Steadman, you want —well, you don't want certain little incidents of your career to get to the ears of the district attorney—the Shackleton bonds, for example. Now, don't be alarmed. I haven't the slightest intention of giving you away, but, come now, let's be on the level with each other."

Sullivan cast an evil look at him.

"You think you've got something on me, eh? Prove it! What bonds did you say?"

Ralston saw that he had nearly made a slip.

"Quite right," said he. "I said Shackleton bonds—I was *thinking* of Shackleton. Of course I meant the Mercantile bonds. But if you have any doubt about my sincerity I might go into the Masterson matter——"

But Sullivan was on his feet, his eyes staring, and his face as pale as it had been on the floor of "The Martin."

"For Heaven's sake!" he implored.

Ralston rose.

"Come! Come! Is it a bargain? You help me and I help you. Where is he?"

"I'll go with you," muttered Sullivan. "Where's my coat?" He looked around anxiously. There was no doubt as to the effectiveness of the reference to the Masterson case.

"Get me a coat," he ordered of the girl. Florence Davenport left the room, leaving the two men facing one another—the criminal and the gentleman. It would have been hard to say which looked the more haggard. The light of the dim lamp made the rings around Ralston's eyes look like huge horn-rimmed spectacles, and his mouth was drawn to a thin line. Inside his head was beginning to sing and the corners of his lids to twitch. He knew the symptoms. He was beginning to "fade out." But he was getting warm now and he paid no heed to himself.

The girl returned, bringing in her arms a pile of new silk-lined black overcoats. Ralston remembered the incident afterwards, but at the time it did not impress him. It is doubtful whether he knew definitely the meaning of the term—"a fence."

Mechanically he selected a coat to fit him and Sullivan did the same. The Davenport girl put on the smallest.

"Gimme a hat," said Sullivan.

Again the girl departed and presently returned with an odd collection of old felt hats of various styles. Now, fully arrayed, Sullivan felt his way gingerly to the door. A pale gleam filtered through the grating. The bolt was shot back and Ralston found himself in the fresh morning air.

A white, misty light filled the sky like a diaphanous, pulsating sheet. If you looked for it it was gone, but as you watched the opposite houses you knew it to be there. Night was struggling with the day, and the cohorts of darkness were barely in the ascendant. The tang of the breeze told the story, filtering in from the river. But the lamps showed brighter than ever. On his box the cabman slumbered, while his steed did likewise in cabhorse fashion.

Sullivan reached up and shook the man roughly. Across the end of the street heavy vans were making their way eastward, filling the little niche in which they stood with a deafening clatter.

"Drive up Broadway," ordered Sullivan.

The cabman removed his hat, ran his finger around the sweatband and replaced it on his head.

"Hully gee!" he repeated reminiscently. Several yanks were required to hoist the horse into a position appropriate to locomotion, and when action was achieved the animal started as if walking on eggs. Sullivan and Ralston took Miss Davenport in her black overcoat between them. Ralston could not tell whether the sky above was white or blue.

Slowly they dragged out into Barrow Street and turned into Green Street. Once or twice they passed a lonely pedestrian or a stray policeman. Soon they saw the lights of the elevated structure at Jefferson Market and caught the moving windows of the trains. A line of truck wagons was moving slowly southward, the drivers sleeping, unmindful of their route. Milk wagons jangling from Hudson Avenue added a livelier note. There was a smell of morning everywhere.

Suddenly Ralston knew he saw white and not blue

above the housetops. The thought filled him with a nervous anxiety to lose no time, and he pushed up the manhole and ordered the cabby to make haste.

"What do you think I am—a bloomin' steamboat?" inquired the cabby in sleepy wrath.

They wheeled into Sixth Avenue and Ralston noticed that the surface cars which passed already had some passengers. Men were standing in twos and threes upon the street corners. Most of them were smoking clay pipes. He wondered what manner of men went to work at this hour. They passed Fourteenth Street and found many persons walking westward—at nightfall they would plod back. It was a long, long way to go to work. No one had spoken in the cab as yet.

"Funny how small the city seems at night," said the girl.

Although there was a germ of psychological truth in the remark, Ralston could think of nothing in reply. He had often noticed the same phenomenon. Of an afternoon, with Fifth Avenue crowded to the curbs, the distance from his club to Forty-second Street appeared immense. By night it seemed no more than a block or two. Now, as they rode northward in the graying light, the distances which his mental cyclometer ticked off seemed small and their pace inordinately slow.

Sullivan had maintained a consistent silence. The Masterson affair had effectually put a quietus upon his belligerency. Ralston was overwhelmed with sleep. There was a weight behind each of his eyeballs that seemed forcing them downward and outward, and the humming in the back of his head had returned. A faint odor of violets and rice powder emanated from the overcoat beside him. Now and again the small head, with its

piles of brown hair and old slouch hat, would begin to incline gradually and gently in his direction, only to be raised again when the brim of the hat touched his shoulder. He leaned his own head in the corner and closed his eyes.

Instantly a heavy curtain, warm, fragrant, deliciously soothing, seemed drawn over him. He found himself talking to Ellen in Miss Evarts's drawing-room. He felt again the elation of his appointment, the gratefulness of appreciation. The man was painting in his name on the blackboard—the man in the yellow-and-black sweater, and he heard the crowd spelling it out and repeating it. Once again he experienced the thrill it had occasioned him the night before. He realized anew the extent to which his selection had brought him into the public eye —the influence which the success or failure of his appointment would have upon the Administration.

The President had been already severely criticised for giving important places to comparatively young and untried men—men of the silk-stocking class—and the President had but a doubtful hold upon the people. Several canards had been started which, in the face of recent socialistic propaganda, had made considerable headway. The yellow journals were denouncing the war as imperialistic, as an excuse for an ambitious executive to play the part of a Cæsar or a Napoleon. They charged that he was surrounding himself with the rich and powerful, and their sons. He was contrasted with Lincoln and Jefferson. In a word, the Administration was in a ticklish position.

Then upon Ralston's wearied brain flashed the picture of his meeting with Colonel Duer; the tawdry, tarnished environment of his search for the worthless Steadman;

his arrival at "The Martin" at two in the morning; his open solicitation of a woman's acquaintance, and the consequent free fight in which, so far as the onlookers knew, he might have killed her companion; then, and most unpleasant of all, his flight, bearing away his victim with him. How could he explain *that*? Why, the thing must have been wired to every morning paper in the country. He could see the headlines:

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF NAVY KILLS MAN

FIGHT AROSE OVER WOMAN IN RESTAURANT

A NEW SCANDAL FOR THE PRESIDENT TO HUSH UP

He shuddered at the thought of it. If he gave himself up and declared that he had struck in self-defense, how could he explain having dashed away with the woman in a hansom? Where had he gone? *Why* had he gone there? His lips were sealed. He *could* make no statement without publicly avowing the whole object of his night's work—the necessity for finding Steadman, and Steadman's relations with Ellen. He saw column after column of interviews with himself, real and imaginary. The most sacred passages of Ellen's life would be made public property, dressed up to suit the editor's fancy, and sold on the corner for a penny.

The possibility sickened him. There was nothing to be done but to resign and go away. In that way only could the Administration be relieved from a most embarrassing situation, and by no other means could Ellen be saved from the humiliation incident to a truthful explanation of the affair. Then, too, he must continue his search. He could not give it up now. He must find Steadman, even while a fugitive from justice himself. He *would* find him.

He opened his eyes. They were still following Sixth Avenue beneath the elevated tracks. It had grown brighter. Sullivan had lighted a cigar. Ralston found himself trembling with excitement. A sweat had broken out all over him. Across the way, on the opposite corner, he saw the lights of a telegraph office, and he raised the manhole and told the cabby to stop.

"What's up?" inquired Sullivan, removing his cigar.

"I've got to send a telegram," said Ralston unsteadily.

Sullivan looked at him with suspicion.

"You ain't givin' me the double cross, eh?"

"I give you my word I'm not," replied Ralston. "It's only a matter of private business."

"Guess it can wait, can't it?"

Ralston smiled in spite of himself. He wished he could tell Sullivan the purport of this telegram which gave him so much anxiety. Simultaneously it occurred to him that it was undesirable to leave the cab even for a moment. Sullivan might take it into his head to disappear.

"Oh, well," he retorted, "it doesn't entirely suit my book to allow you a chance to side-step me either, so we'll settle it by letting Miss Davenport send the wire for me. In that way we can each continue in the other's company. Much more agreeable, of course. Miss Davenport, may I ask you to get me a blank from inside?"

The girl sprang down and quickly returned with a sheaf of blanks and a pencil. Ralston scribbled on his knee a hasty message:

To the President, White House, Washington. Am forced, after all, to decline appointment. See morning papers. Am writing fully.

RALSTON.

He handed her half a dollar and she reëntered the office.

Now Miss Davenport was a young person wise in her generation. She had seen many men in many situations, and she realized that the man who had handed her this particular telegram was in a condition bordering on collapse. Had she seen fit to use a sporting term she would have said that Ralston was "groggy" with nervousness and excitement. In addition she was not devoid of the usual amount of feminine curiosity. At any rate, her first move was to read the telegram.

"He's crazy!" she exclaimed under her breath. "Why, he doesn't even know whether they got his name! And Jim's all right." She turned the message over in her hand.

"I guess that telegram *can* wait. There won't be anything in the papers. The presses are locked at one o'clock."

"Say," she remarked to the sleepy operator, "what's the rate to Washington, D. C.?"

"Twenty-five for ten words, and two cents a word over."

"Change that for me, will you? Let me have some coppers?"

The man fished out the small change and went back to his accounts.

Miss Davenport slipped the paper into her pocket and returned to the cab.

"Nineteen cents change," she said, handing it to Ralston.

"Where to?" asked the cabby mechanically.

"West Forty-fifth Street," said Sullivan.

They started on. The street lamps were fast paling

beneath the dawn. At Thirty-third Street and Broadway a newsboy was hopping on the cars and shouting his items. A strange thrill of determination had seized Ralston. The die was cast now. There was nothing more to consider.

"Here's your *Morning Journal*!" cried the boy as the cab swung by. "New Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Twelfth Regiment starts with a full quota of officers!" He waved his sheets at them.

Inside the cab Ralston set his teeth.

"I'll make it a full quota!" he muttered.

They turned down Thirty-third Street into Fifth Avenue.

"Look here," said Sullivan suddenly, "all I do is to show him to you, see? Understand, I don't get into no mix-up myself! My job ends when I give you the pass."

"All right," said Ralston. "Just show him to me. That's all I ask."

"All right," repeated Sullivan.

They passed Forty-second Street and turned into Forty-fifth, just as the lights in the crosstown cars had been put out.

VIII

THE house before which they stopped was an old-fashioned brownstone front. A brownstone flight of steps with a heavy brownstone balustrade and huge, carved newel post of the same depressing material led to a pair of ponderous stained doors tight shut with the air of finality possible only to a brownstone side street. The shades on the four rows of windows of this impenetrable mansion were smoothly drawn. At the grated window in the area the lower half of a bird cage, just visible beneath the screen, was the only indication of occupancy. The whole aspect of the place was that of somnolent respectability. One could imagine the door being swung wide, the rug shaken, the broom making a fictitious passage through the vestibule, the curtains going up unevenly in the front parlor, the shades raised in the area, the canary thrilling in response to the shaking of the kitchen range, and *Paterfamilias* coming down the steps at about eight twenty-five in a square Derby hat, to go to his real estate office. This is what occurs at four homes out of five in this locality every morning from the first day of October to the first day of July.

But no eye within the last ten years had beheld a shade raised in this particular establishment. The census taker had never entered its doors. No woman had ever passed its threshold. No child had ever played within

its halls. Once a year a load of wines was deposited there and once a month a grocer's wagon paused outside. The coal was put in during the summer—forty tons, C. O. D. and five per cent off. The milkman was the only matutinal visitor, and the milkman left his wares upon the flagging of the servants' entrance. At eleven o'clock a colored man emerged from the area and departed in the direction of Sixth Avenue with a basket upon his arm. In half an hour he returned. This was the chief occurrence of the day. At seven in the evening two hansom cabs drew up before the door to allow four men to enter the house—also by the area. That was all, except that the ice wagon stopped daily, but the colored man took the ice off the hooks at the door.

The visitors at the house arrived in cabs between the hours of eight and twelve P.M., and departed between the latter hour and five in the morning. There are forty similar *ménages* north of Thirty-third Street and east of Long Acre Square.

"He's in here," said Sullivan. "But I ain't goin' inside."

"You're not, eh?" remarked Ralston. "Very well, we stay here together then until he comes out—and then you go down to headquarters with *me*."

"Look here, Sackett," whined Sullivan, "how can I go in? They'd see me and know I'd sold 'em out. I can't do it. It would finish me. Don't be unreasonable."

"Well, how do I know he's here?" asked Ralston. "Don't be unreasonable yourself."

"Well, I *know* he's here," said Sullivan. "I tell you what I'll do. I'll go into the hall, and when you're satisfied I ain't givin' you the double-cross, I'll slip out.

Suppose I showed you Steadman, that would satisfy you, wouldn't it?"

"It certainly would," said Ralston.

Sullivan looked up and down the street and then clambered out in a disjointed and rheumatic fashion.

"I'm sorry, Miss Davenport, I can't let you have the cab," said Ralston. "I shall need it—I hope."

Sullivan was on the sidewalk, looking at the house.

The girl suddenly seized Ralston's hand.

"Mr. Ralston," she said, "be careful while you are in that house. Don't mention a word of what I've told you about Sullivan. They're a reckless lot. Watch yourself and them. Play it easy, and good luck to you. Some time, I hope, I'll see you again."

Ralston pressed her hand.

He climbed down.

"Where to?" mumbled the cabby.

"Stay right *here* until I come out—if it's six hours!" directed Ralston.

The dawn was flushing the chocolate-colored fronts before them and a milk wagon was working gradually down the block. Ralston felt weak in the knees, but he pounded his feet on the pavement and stepped quickly after Sullivan, who had started up the steps.

"I needn't warn you that there must be no funny business, Sullivan," said Ralston, as the other fumbled in his trousers pocket. "Our bargain holds. Your life for mine and Steadman's."

"You needn't worry," replied Sullivan. "Homicide isn't in our business. I wish I could turn Steadman over to you bound hand and foot, but I can't. You've got *him* to deal with. The rest is easy. The gang's pretty near through with him. But you've got to handle *him* yourself."

Sullivan inserted the key and turned the handle of the door, which swung open as if on greased hinges.

As Ralston crossed the threshold it occurred to him forcibly that although the house in which he now stood was not over three blocks from his lodgings, and that his round-the-clock chase had brought him, like a man lost in the woods, back almost to his starting point, the fact that he had actually struck Steadman's trail at all, to say nothing of having run him to earth, was in itself no less than a miracle. Fate had certainly favored him upon the one hand, if it had dashed his hopes upon the other. He was the same Ralston that had jumped into the same cab just around the corner some seven hours before, but in that short passage of time the current of his existence had gone swirling off in an entirely unexpected direction. The hopes and ambitions of the evening had faded to fair dreams lingering on after a disappointing awakening. Apart from his utter exhaustion a pall had fallen upon his spirit—he had become undervitalized physically and psychically. He did not care what might happen before he regained the street, and he knew that almost anything might happen. The gamblers had been in an ugly mood for a long time. Yet he knew that his hold on Sullivan, fictitious as it was, was for the time being a sure one. Moreover, the experiences of the night had not lessened his confidence in his capacity to handle any new situation as it might arise.

Sullivan now addressed himself to the inner door, which opened as easily as its predecessor, and an old-fashioned hall disclosed itself before them. On the right a pair of heavy *portières* concealed the entrance to what was, or at least some time had been, the drawing-room. The usual steep flight of carpeted walnut stairs ascended

to the usual narrow hallway on the second floor. A massive walnut hatrack supported a huge mirror and a collection of Inverness coats and tall hats. A bronze gas chandelier burned brightly, and a colored man lay extended at full length upon the floor with his head resting upon the bottom stair. The air was close and heavy and filled with the thin blue smoke of distant cigars. Apart from the audible repose of the negro the house was as silent as a New England Sabbath morning.

Sullivan strode toward the recumbent figure upon the floor and administered a stout kick, at which the sleeper suddenly raised his head and drew up his knees.

"Here you, Marcus, wake up!" growled Sullivan. "Where's Mr. Farrer?"

The negro rubbed his eyes and gazed stupidly at the two figures before him without replying.

"Where's Mr. Farrer?" repeated Sullivan.

Marcus pointed over his shoulders and up the stairs.

"He's in de back room, boss."

"Who's up there?"

"Jes' a single game—five gen'lemen."

"How long they been playin'?"

"Couple days, Ah reckon."

"How long have you been asleep?"

"Couple days, Ah reckon, boss," repeated Marcus.

"Is Mr. Steadman up there?"

"He de gen'leman they calls Mr. X?" asked Marcus with more interest.

"I think so," answered Sullivan.

"Yes, sir, he's up dere. Say, boss, what day is this?" asked Marcus. "Sunday, ain't it? We began playin' Satudy, but Ah reckon Ah done got 'fused 'bout de time."

But Sullivan did not reply. Instead he turned to Ralston and said:

"Look here, I don't see any way out of my having to introduce you to the game. After I've done that you'll have to manage the thing for yourself."

He started laboriously upstairs. Marcus returned to his previous picture of elegant repose. At the top of the first flight they turned and, passing along the hall, ascended another. The smoke grew thicker as they progressed. The only light came from the gas brackets, for the skylight over the wall was draped with a sheet of black cloth. At the top of the second flight Ralston caught the faint click of chips.

"It's up to you," said Sullivan, "if you want to go in."

"I'll take the responsibility," answered Ralston, but his heart began to beat faster, a phenomenon he attributed to the fact that there was no elevator.

At the top of the last flight they paused. The sound of chips and low voices came distinctly from beneath the door of the room in the back. Then followed a pause, during which some one cursed his luck loudly.

Sullivan pushed open the door and Ralston entered at his elbow. At first he could see nothing, owing to the thick haze that hung like a cloud throughout the room. Then he made out the figures of five men in their shirt-sleeves seated at a medium-sized table. These started to their feet at the interruption, and one of them, larger than the others, cried out:

"What do you want?"

"It's only me—little, tiny me," said Sullivan with a laugh. "I've brought a new come-on that thinks he knows the game. Can you let him sit in?"

Ralston was watching Sullivan narrowly for the first sign of betrayal, but it was clear that Sullivan was living up to his bargain.

A drawling voice came from the table. "Five's the gambler's game—we're nearly through, anyhow."

The tall man hesitated.

"We're nearly through, as Mr. X says," he remarked, not impolitely. "It's quite late. Of course, if you're a friend of Sullivan's——"

"Oh, let me take a stack. I've made a night of it and I want to get my bait back. I guess I've still got the price," said Ralston. He pulled a roll of bills from his pocket.

"Well," said the other, "gamblers' rules. This is an open game. I'm afraid he's entitled to come in. Goin', Sullivan? Well, so-long. Close the door after you."

"So-long, Sackett," said Sullivan.

"Good-by!" said Ralston, with emphasis. "We're quits, aren't we?"

"Sure," replied Sullivan.

"Let me present you to the company," said the tall man. "My name's Farrer. I guess you've heard of me. These are my friends, Messrs. Brown, Jones, and Robinson, and Mr. X. Your own name is Mr. ——?"

"Sackett," said Ralston.

"All right, Mr. Sackett. We were just about goin' to pull out, but we'll hold the game open for you for a few minutes, just to give the boys a chance to even up. No, we're not playing dollar limit. The lid's off. But just out of respect for the cloth we don't go above a thousand at one clip. Take a full stack? Amounts to exactly forty-nine hundred and seventy-five. Brown, a thousand; yel-

low, five hundred; blue, one hundred; red, fifty; white, twenty-five and the blind."

"Thank you," said Ralston, with a slight leap of the heart, as Farrer pushed over the little pile of ivory counters. "If you don't object I'll take off my overcoat for luck."

IX

RALSTON removed his dress coat and seized the opportunity for a rapid glance around the room. Farrer had retaken his seat and the others were moving over to make room for an extra chair. The curtains, tightly drawn, repelled the eddying smoke, which slowly drew toward the fireplace.

Ralston had no time to study the men about him. He had recognized Steadman immediately, but it was apparent that Steadman himself was in no condition to recognize anybody. The boy sat limply in his chair with his head down and his eyes rolled toward the ceiling, apparently incapable of speech or action, yet suddenly returning to life and to complete lucidity at irregular intervals. Farrer he knew by reputation. The other three men were probably professional card sharps masquerading under the guise of men about town. Of what he should eventually do Ralston had no clear idea. It was obvious that the gang were not yet through with Steadman, and, moreover, that until Steadman wanted to go away he would stay where he was. He must fight for time and await his opportunity.

Farrer sat with his back to the door, the two chairs to his left being occupied by the gentlemen introduced as "Brown" and "Jones." Next to them and facing Farrer came Steadman, with "Robinson" between him and Ralston, who sat immediately to the right of Farrer and filled

the last seat. He thus had one of the most advantageous places at the table.

"Deal out," said Farrer to the man on his left. "It's getting late. Ante up, boys. I have a hunch that something is coming my way this time."

The dealer dealt rapidly round, using, Ralston was particular to notice, the same cards which had been laid on the table when he entered. It was clear that a pack "stacked" for five could not be used for six, and Ralston, picking up his hand and finding he had three jacks pat, pushed in his white chip.

"I'll draw cards," said he quietly. All came in except Steadman, who threw his cards down upon the table with an oath.

The dealer handed the remaining two men three cards each, Ralston took one, Farrer three, and the dealer one. Although our novice did not improve his hand, he raised a fifty-dollar bet made by the man upon his right by a blue chip. Farrer dropped out and the dealer raised Ralston another blue. The other two men dropped, and Ralston "saw" the dealer, who threw down a busted flush.

"Good work, old man!" exclaimed Farrer. "You're no sucker. Deal for Mr. X, there, Robinson."

"I can deal for myself, thanks," remarked Steadman, and indeed he managed to do so surprisingly well.

This time Ralston held nothing and declined to play, while Steadman won a small amount with two large pair. Each man had lying before him a pile of greenbacks held in place by a heavy paper weight of brass surmounted by an ash receiver, Steadman's pile being composed almost entirely of one-thousand-dollar bills.

Presently Ralston found himself holding three queens on the deal and filled on the draw with a pair of nines.

The cards had been running low, and he had already won in the neighborhood of twelve or thirteen hundred dollars. The three queens following his three jacks struck him as rather a coincidence, and betting merely a white chip he watched the others to see what would happen. To his surprise all dropped out but Steadman, who had drawn but a single card and who raised him a blue chip. Ralston now raised in his turn a like amount, and Steadman, there now being nearly five hundred dollars on the table, raised him a yellow. But Ralston, feeling confident of his position, pushed in a brown—the first thousand-dollar bet he had ever made. The gamblers were watching them with interest.

"I win," said Steadman, shoving over a brown chip and throwing down a flush. "All sky blue."

"Sorry," answered Ralston, "three ladies and a little pair."

"Curse the luck," growled Steadman. "One more hand and I quit."

"Quit?" cried one of the men. "Why, the game's young yet. Nobody's won or lost anything to speak of. Don't go *now*! Mr. Sackett wants to play and he's got a lot of our money. We're entitled to our revenge."

"I didn't ask him to play," mumbled Steadman. "I'm sick of the game and I don't feel just right. I feel sort of sick. I'm only goin' to play one more hand."

"All right! Jack pot!" cried Farrer cheerfully. "It's a house rule. Jack pots on all full houses containing the royal family. A 'palace pot' we call it. Give us a new pack."

One of the men leaned back and reached down a new unopened pack from a side table. The cards they had been playing with were red. These were blue and the

revenue stamp was unbroken. But a new pack on a declaration that the game was going to end struck Ralston as curiously unnecessary. The air in the room was beginning to make his head swim, and a glance at his watch disclosed that it was half after five. It was time for him to get Steadman away, but how to do it?

"Hundred-dollar ante," said Farrer, shuffling the cards ostentatiously and dealing himself a jack. They each put in a blue. Steadman was helplessly fumbling his chips, counting and recounting them. Silence fell upon the table as Farrer tossed the cards accurately to each player.

As the last cards were being dealt Steadman's fifth card struck his glass, balanced, and fell slowly over. It was a deuce of hearts.

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed Farrer apologetically.

"Hang you!" escaped from one of the others, and Ralston saw that the man's hands were trembling.

"I won't take that card," said Steadman, awaking suddenly as out of a trance. "It's no good. Gimme another!"

Farrer flushed.

"I'm sorry, you'll have to take it. It's on the deal, not the draw. The rule is as old as the game."

"I say I won't take it," snarled Steadman. "I haven't seen my hand. I won't take it. I'll stay out, but I won't pick up that card—it's no good." He gave a silly laugh.

One of the other men sprang to his feet.

"You've got to take it," he cried. "You can't refuse it. You've got to abide by the rules."

"Sit down, you fool!" shouted Farrer, almost losing control of himself. "Who's running this game? Mr.

Steadman can't have another card. He can look at his hand, and if he wants to stay out he can, but he's got to play the cards he's got. Pick up your hand, old man. Don't let's get upset over a little thing like that. Why, it may be the very card you want."

But Steadman's obstinacy was aroused.

"I won't do either," said he. "*You* can't make me play. I can stay out, can't I? I can forfeit my ante. That's my own business, ain't it? Well, I'll watch you fellers play for once. What's a blue chip!"

"You fool!" broke in one of the others. "Why don't you look at your cards? Don't throw away a hundred dollars like that! Here, if you're so proud, I'll look at 'em for you—and stay out."

He reached for the cards, but Steadman struck his hand away.

"Touch those cards if you dare!" he shouted, his eyes glaring. "Leave my cards alone!"

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" exclaimed Farrer soothingly. "Of course, Mr. X can refuse to play if he likes. It's his privilege. Won't you change your mind? Well, take out your chip—nobody objects. Count it a dead hand."

"My chip stays in and I stay out," muttered Steadman.

Ralston saw a furtive look pass between two of the others. Farrer dealt the remaining cards and picked up his hand, grunting as he looked at his cards. The man next him swore softly.

"I can't open it," he growled.

"Nothin' doin'," said the second gambler.

Steadman remained staring at his deuce of hearts.

"By me!" remarked the third gambler. Then Ral-

ston picked up his hand. He felt as he used to feel when under the student lamp in his college room he had calculated the chances of filling a bobtail straight as against a four flush. The others were watching him eagerly. Four jacks closely backed one another in his hand. He could hardly suppress a grin.

"Ye-es, I'll open it," he remarked hesitantly. He toyed with the yellows and the browns. Then his fingers slipped across the pile. "I'll let you all in easy," he said affably, "for a little white seed."

The gambler across the table bit his lip.

"Well, I'm in!" exclaimed Farrer with an affectation of light-heartedness. "It's just about my limit."

The other three pushed in their chips without comment. Each of them took one card. Ralston took one. Farrer took four.

"Ah!" sighed the latter, half to himself.

"Well, this looks pretty good to me," said the first gambler with a slight smile, pushing in a brown chip.

The second gambler pursed up his lips and shrugged his shoulders. "Suits me, too," he remarked good-naturedly, "I'll up you a thousand."

He contributed two brown chips with great deliberation. Steadman was giggling foolishly.

"Where would I have been?" he gibbered. "The tall grass wouldn't have hidden me."

The third gambler now came into the game. It appeared that he, also, thought highly of his hand, for he raised both his comrades by a brown chip.

"One, two—and back again!" he murmured. "I've got you pinched. Only six thousand in the pot—and four aces will take it all! Come right in, Mr. Sackett, the water's warm." They watched him covetously.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Ralston with deliberation. "I have one or two cards myself. They look pretty good to *me*! But then I'm not used to the game. I wonder if you'd stand a raise." He picked up four brown chips and counted them slowly. They eyed him, hardly breathing. Then Ralston laid the chips back on the table.

"No," said he regretfully. "It's too high for me. Here are my openers," and he threw down his hand face upward on the table.

"Four j-jacks!" stammered Steadman, rubbing his eyes. "Four j-jacks!"

The others, with the exception of Farrer, had arisen and stood glowering at Ralston.

"What's this?" exclaimed Farrer harshly.

"What's your game?" cried another.

"Nothing, gentlemen. I lie down. That's all. It's my privilege."

The gambler ground his teeth and placed his cards on the table.

"Aren't you going to finish the game?" asked Ralston with elaborate sarcasm.

"Of course we are," shot back Farrer. "Only to see a man do a damn fool thing like that is enough to bust up any game." He looked at his cards.

"I'm out," he added shortly.

The first gambler did not seem to regard his hand any longer with favor, for he "dropped" immediately. So also did the second, and the third drew the chips toward him, no cards having been disclosed.

Steadman was still giggling feebly.

"I say," he mumbled again, "you *are* easy! Four jacks! O my! O——"

"Do you think so?" inquired Ralston politely, as he reached quickly across the table and, picking up the first gambler's hand, turned it over. The man grabbed for the cards, but he was an instant too late. Four aces lay under the gaslight.

"Not so easy, eh?" continued Ralston. "Pretty good judgment, it seems to me. I'll have my ante back, if you please," and he replaced one of the blue chips on his own pile. "It requires more nerve to lay down four aces than four jacks."

The men stared at him without speaking, and Farrer arose abruptly.

"I supposed I was in a respectable game," he announced with severity. "If you gentlemen," turning to Ralston and Steadman, "will step downstairs I will adjust matters with you. As for you," addressing the other three, "make yourselves scarce and never come into my house again." They moved slowly toward the door.

"Don't worry on our account, Mr. Farrer," remarked Ralston suavely. "I'm sure the matter was merely a coincidence. Seeing a man lie down on four jacks is enough to account for any apparent little irregularity." But, before he had finished, the three, closely followed by Farrer, had departed. Then Ralston looked over to where Steadman was sitting with a smile of utter lassitude.

"We were well out of that, I fancy," said he.

"I wonder what *I* had?" answered Steadman dreamily. He fumbled unsteadily for his hand and turned it over card by card.

The first was a deuce of spades.

"Oh!" he remarked, "a pair of 'em, anyhow."

The next was a deuce of diamonds, and the last a deuce of clubs.

Steadman looked stupidly around the table.

"Four little twos!" he muttered. "And *you* had four knaves and he had four aces. I guess there's a special Providence looking out for *me*. Say, what won that pot, anyway?"

Farrer suddenly reappeared at the door.

"Here's your money, gentlemen," he remarked, counting the chips in front of each of them and throwing down the appropriate number of bills. Sorry to have the game broken up in such a way, but these sharps get in everywhere. I hope you won't mention the incident. I have a very fine line of patrons and nothing of the kind has ever occurred before."

As he turned away Steadman raised his eyes and looked the gambler full in the face.

"Farrer," said he, "you've robbed me—you and your gang. Some time I'll make you pay for it, you—thief!" Then the fire died as suddenly as it had come, his head dropped forward listlessly, his eyes rolled ceilingward, and he fell to mumbling and muttering to himself. Ralston sprang to his side, as Farrer slid through the door.

"I'm Dick Ralston," he said. "Don't you recognize me?"

Steadman gazed at him stolidly.

"Rals'on?" he muttered. "Rals'on? So you are! I guess you are. Why not? What of it?"

He put his head on his arms and leaned them against the table top.

Ralston grasped him by the shoulder and shook him roughly.

"Pull yourself together!" he cried. "You must get out of here quickly." He shook Steadman again.

"Don't you understand?" he said sharply. "Your regiment leaves in an hour. *Your regiment!* Your company!"

Steadman looked at him dully. A burned-out cigarette hung from his under lip by its own cohesive ability.

"Rats!" he muttered. "I've chucked all that. Regiment can go for all of me unless it wants to wait."

"You fool!" shouted Ralston. "Don't you see it's the end of you if you don't go!"

"The end's come already! I'm a dead one now!"

"Get up there!" returned Ralston. "I'll put you at the head of your company in forty minutes. Get up, I say."

"Don't be an ass, Rals'on!" snarled Steadman. "I'll do as I choose. I tell you it's too late!"

"It's nothing of the kind. Why, man, your uniform's all ready for you. They haven't started yet. Buck up!"

"You seem awful interested, it strikes me."

"Never mind that. Just be thankful some one cared enough to give you the tip. Come on now."

"I tell you it's too late. How the hell can I go—to *war*?" Steadman laughed in a sickly fashion.

Ralston's heart sank and his gorge rose. Had he sacrificed his future for a cad like this? And was he going to fail besides?

"You miserable snipe!" he cried, for an instant utterly losing control of himself.

"You shan't—insult me!" chattered Steadman, rising unsteadily to his feet. In a flash Ralston perceived the possibilities of the situation.

"You're a coward, Steadman!" he cried. "A welcher!"

Steadman's eyes glared wildly. "I'll kill you for that!" he gasped.

"Come on down and fight it out then, if you're a man," sneered Ralston, turning and making for the head of the stairs. Steadman groped his way after him along the wall.

"Come on, you welcher!" taunted Ralston.

With an inarticulate cry of anger, Steadman clasped the banisters and half slid, half stumbled to the entrance hall.

"I'll fight you here!" he cried. "I'll kill you!"

"No! No!" answered Ralston. "Outside."

Marcus attempted to put on Steadman's coat, but the latter fought him angrily off. Then he staggered and nearly fell.

"Oh, I'm sick!" he cried. "I can't see."

"Catch him!" directed Ralston, springing to his side and guiding him across the threshold. They led him down the steps, hustled him across the sidewalk and into the hansom.

"Where to?" inquired cabby automatically.

"John McCullough's—drive like mad!" replied Ralston.

X

"KEEP away from me," muttered Steadman, as Ralston climbed into the cab beside him. "Keep away, or I'll kill you." His face had turned a livid yellow, and he lay limp against the cushions. The cabby started his horse round the corner into the avenue.

"Steadman!" cried Ralston, sick at heart. "Steadman, old man! I apologize! I beg your pardon! Do you understand? I *apologize.* It was just a trick to get you out—away."

"Ugh!" groaned the other.

"Brace up! You'll be all right in a minute. All right—in a minute. Understand? Fit as a preacher!"

"I don't know. I'm awfully sick!"

They raced down the avenue in silence until, with a sharp turn, the hansom dashed into East Twenty-seventh Street and stopped with a lurch in front of a low red-brick house close to the corner.

The clock on the corner church showed that he had less than an hour and a half as Ralston rushed to the steps and rang the bell. The door was almost instantly opened by a heavily built man with a pleasant Irish face.

"Hello, Mr. Ralston!" he ejaculated.

"Sh!" answered the other. "Get this man out quick and into the house. You've got to knock him into shape inside of ten minutes. He's at the end of a long one. Ten minutes, do you understand?"

"Leave him to me," answered the matter-of-fact McCullough, then crossing to the cab, "Give me your arm, sir," he said to Steadman.

"Leave me alone!" muttered Steadman.

Without another word the Irishman put his arms around him, and, as if he were a child, lifted him to the ground, across the sidewalk, and into the house.

Ralston followed and closed the door. Outside, the cabby fell asleep again and the horse stood with one hip six inches higher than the other and its head between its legs.

"Hi there, Terry! Sthrip off the gent's clothes!"

Another husky Irishman appeared from somewhere, and the two led Steadman into a sort of dressing room, where they speedily relieved him of his garments. Without a pause McCullough opened a glass door into a tiled passage at the end of which could be seen another door clouded with steam. First, however, he poured a teaspoonful of absinthe into the palm of his hand and held it to Steadman's face. "Snuff it up yer nose!" said he.

Steadman seemed dazed. Like a half-resuscitated man he did as he was told, gagging and coughing.

"Come here now," said Terry.

Steadman walked quietly down the passage.

"Only for a minute," said the bath man.

He opened the door and shoved Steadman in, closing and locking it behind him.

"That's all he needs," commented McCullough.

"How long will you give him?"

"Just five minutes. He didn't like the absinthe, did he?"

Ralston laughed softly. He knew what twentieth century miracles McCullough could work.

"Have you got a telephone?" he inquired.

"Shure," answered Mac, leading the way to the office.

Ralston lost no time in calling up the armory.

"I want Clarence. Send him to the 'phone!"

A wait of a couple of minutes followed.

"Is that you, Clarence?"

"Yassah."

"Jump on a car and bring Mr. Steadman's uniform and valise to —— East Twenty-seventh Street at once."

When he returned to the passage Steadman was beating feebly on the glass door from the inside. Terry grinned and shook his head, holding up two fingers. The tortured one threw himself in agony into a steamer chair, only to leap instantly to his feet with an inaudible yell of pain.

"Are you ready?" Terry inquired of his employer.

"Shure."

They threw open the door and each grabbed an arm of their victim, dragging him down the passage into the dressing room. Another door opened into a room in which was a large tank. Without ceremony the two Irishmen swung their glistening patient off the edge and into the water. Steadman shrieked, choked and splashed helplessly.

"Down wit' him!" cried McCullough, and they forced him beneath the surface.

"Ag'in!"

Down he went.

"Now up!" and they lifted him bodily up on to the floor once more, and yanked him streaming into the dressing room. Steadman's face was a bright red, but he walked to a corner, while the two Irishmen with two

little towels gently blotted the water from his back, sides, and arms. His legs they left to take care of themselves.

"Ready there!" cried McCullough, giving Steadman a sharp blow that sent him staggering across the room.

"Back again!" yelled Terry, punching his victim in the chest with his open hand and sending him reeling toward McCullough.

Then they threw themselves upon him, slapping him, banging him from side to side, pulling his ears, arms and nose until he holloed for mercy, tossing him from one to the other, and swinging him at full length by his hands and feet. Finally, they flung him helpless, red and gasping for breath, upon a table. Once more they slapped him until he glowed like a lobster, and then rubbed him down with alcohol.

"On with his clothes!" shouted Ralston. "How do you feel, Jack, old man?"

"All right!" replied Steadman weakly, with a grin. "How they murdered me!"

At this moment the street bell rang and a middle-aged negro appeared with a valise, tin box, and chamois-covered sword.

"Why, it's old Clarence!" ejaculated Steadman.

The negro undid the valise and took out the olive-drab khaki field uniform. In a trice he had buckled and buttoned the delinquent officer into it. From the tin box came a campaign hat. Steadman fastened on the sword himself. There were tears of feeble excitement in his eyes.

"Are you sure it's not too late?" he asked anxiously.

"I've taken my oath to get you there," answered Ralston.

"By George! You're a good fellow!" repeated Steadman. He held out his hand. "You've saved my reputation—I might almost say—my life."

Ralston took the hand held out to him, the hand only a few moments before raised against him in anger. It was quite warm. McCullough had done his bit well.

"You weren't yourself. You didn't realize—" he began, and stopped. The room swam before his eyes, and he groped for a chair. With the partial accomplishment of his object, and the consequent physical and mental relaxation, the fatigue of the pursuit and the nervous strain which he had been under took possession of him. He found the chair and sank into it, shutting out the light with his hand. Steadman called McCullough, who quickly brought him something to drink. Somewhat revived, Ralston staggered to his feet eager to escape from the warmth of the overheated room and to finish his task.

"Come along, Steadman. We haven't much time. Less than an hour."

"Poor old chap, you're done up!"

"No, no; I'm all right. We must be getting along."

"But we don't leave, you say, until seven!"

"I know, but we must be getting along."

"Where?"

Ralston hesitated.

"I'll tell you outside." He shuffled toward the door. Steadman followed.

On the steps he turned toward Ralston inquiringly.

"Ellen has been waiting," said the latter in a low voice, looking away.

"What do you mean? Does she know?" asked Steadman in a whisper.

"I don't know how much," replied Ralston. "She feared you were going to lose your chance—that you'd be done for, and asked me to try and look you up. She —she cares for you, I think."

Steadman uttered a groan.

"Oh, I'm a brute," he muttered.

He looked anything but a brute in his olive-drab uniform, campaign hat and shining sword.

"Come along," said Ralston, grabbing him by the arm. They took their seats in the hansom.

"Where to?" asked the cabby monotonously.

"The Chilsworth," said Ralston.

Once more the exhausted animal climbed wearily up Fifth Avenue. A touch of yellow sunlight was just gilding the housetops on the left, and the street stretched gray and solitary northward.

"You say she's waiting?" Steadman asked nervously.

"Yes."

"For how long?"

"All night."

Steadman shuddered.

"How did you know where to look for me?"

"I didn't."

Ralston was beginning to feel the revivifying effects of the whisky and soda and the fresh morning air.

"'Twas like looking for a needle in haystack,'" he hummed. "'Although the chance of finding it was small.' Not an easy job, my friend."

"But I didn't know you were in New York!"

"I'd only been back a few days."

"And Ellen asked you to hunt me up?"

"Ye-es."

Again Ralston felt weary, awfully weary, and sleepy.

"By George, you're a brick!"

"Oh, don't mention it!" yawned this "finder of lost persons."

"But why should you? You hardly knew me!"

"Somebody had to do it."

"And that somebody had to know *how*, eh?"

"It would appear so. You'd concealed yourself pretty effectually for some time. Your friend the colonel was getting anxious, you know."

"How on earth did you ever do it?"

"Tell you some time," answered Ralston sleepily. "By the way, do you mind saying how long you'd been in that house?"

"Three days."

"And lost——?"

"Twenty-seven thousand dollars."

"No one seemed to know you gambled."

"I don't. It was my first experience."

"How long has this little expedition lasted?"

"Two weeks."

The Searcher glanced at his companion. Already the stimulus of the bath had succumbed to fatigue. The face was drawn and hollow; the eyes red; the mouth twitched. Ralston turned away, his old loathing and disgust returning in an instant.

The driver turned into Fifty-seventh Street, and the sun jumped above the housetops. Suddenly Steadman burst into tears, sobbing in long-drawn hollow sobs like a wearied child, covering his face with his hands.

"Come, come, buck up! This won't do!" exclaimed Ralston.

"O God!" groaned Steadman tremulously. "I can't face her. Turn around! Anywhere!"

"You shall see her!" answered the other. "And now!"

Steadman wiped his eyes. His chest heaved convulsively. He had grown quite pale.

"Don't make me!" he gasped.

"You shall see her—as you are," repeated Ralston, "and thank her for having saved you from disgrace."

Steadman said nothing more. The cab drew up before the door of an apartment house.

"Here we are," said Ralston. "Get out!"

Steadman hesitated.

"Get out! Do you hear?" shouted Ralston, with anger in his eyes.

Steadman obeyed, his companion following close behind him. Inside, a darky sat fast asleep by the elevator. Ralston rapped loudly upon the glass and the man moved, rubbed his eyes, and came stupidly to the door.

"Take this gentleman up to Miss Ferguson's apartment," said Ralston. "I'll wait below for you. You can have just ten minutes, understand?"

He returned to the sidewalk. The cabby had fallen asleep again. A feeling of intense loneliness swept over him. He longed to throw himself inside the hansom and rest his exhausted frame. His bones ached and his muscles seemed strange and raspy, and he kept himself awake by walking nervously backward and forward before the house. He could hardly keep his eyes from closing and his knees trembled as if he were convalescing from an illness.

"I did it!" he repeated over and over to himself. "By George! I did it!—saved him for her. Only for me and he would be what he called himself—'a dead one.'"

The sunlight in the street grew momentarily brighter. Milk wagons groped their way from door to door, the horses stopping undirected at the proper places, and starting up again in response to uncouth roars from the drivers.

An elevated train rattled by at the end of the street, and some workmen in overalls, conversing loudly in a foreign dialect, hurried noisily past. A few maids unchained front doors, gave the rugs feeble flaps, and eyed Ralston curiously before going inside to resume their domestic duties.

He found that he was walking in a circle. His brain had fallen asleep. He realized that he had been dreaming, but the dream was vague and indistinct. Then he heard the faint sound of distant music. A housemaid dropped her rug and ran toward the avenue. Two pedestrians turned back in the same direction. A driver jumped into his milk wagon and sent the horse galloping.

Ralston listened. Yes, the music was getting louder. They were playing "Good-by, Little Girl, Good-by!" It must be the regiment on their way from the armory to the ferry. He looked at his watch with a lump in his throat. It was "good-by" for him as well as for Steadman. There was no longer any doubt. Perhaps he could get a commission. He'd go away, anyhow.

A hastily formed group of spectators on the corner began to wave their hats. The band was very near. A squad of figures stepping briskly in time came into view, at their head the erect form of Colonel Duer. He could recognize the other members of the staff, the adjutant, the commissary, the quartermaster, the doctor—he knew them all. On the left trudged the chaplain.

"Good-by, Little Girl, Good-by!"

The drum major following the staff turned and swung his baton, then resumed his former position. By George, they were playing well! Ah! What a difference it made when it was real business. Just behind the band followed the field music, with old "Davie" carrying the drum.

"Good-by, Little Girl, Good-by!"

The drums passed and the fifers. Then at a little distance came the lieutenant colonel and his staff at the head of the first battalion, marching full company front down the avenue. Ralston's heart beat faster. That was where *he* could have been. How well those boys marched; just like a parade, their yellow legs eating up—eating up—eating up—eating up the ground. The band had grown fainter. You could hear the chupp—chupp—chupp—chupp of the hundreds of feet. Eyes front! No one to look at them, but eyes front! This was business. How trim they looked, each man in his olive-drab uniform, leggings, and russet shoes. How set were the faces beneath the gray felt hats! How lightly they bore their heavy load of haversack, yellow blanket roll, canteen, and cartridge belt. How the sword bayonets at their sides clinked and threw back the light to the blue barrels of their Krag-Jorgensens!

"Good-by, Little Girl, Good-by," came faintly from the distance. Still the yellow rows kept passing. The first battalion ended.

Then a major appeared, walking alone, followed closely by a captain and first lieutenant. Ralston strained his eyes for the yellow line behind them. Ah, there they were! Good boys! Good boys!

The even companies swung by until the battalion had passed.

Then came another major at the head of the third battalion. The third battalion! The line swept across from curb to curb with a single man behind the major—a lieutenant. Company D! Steadman's! The major's face was set in a hard frown. Ralston laughed feebly. That was all right. He'd fix that. Just wait a few minutes. His captain would be there.

The little crowd on the corner began to cheer. Another company came into view. They had the colors—the dear old colors. Ralston doffed his hat and held it to his breast, straining his glance after the flag. The pavement floated away from him and his eyes filled with hot tears. He could not see the lines of marching men, but stood staring at the corner beyond which the colors had disappeared.

Overcome with utter exhaustion, he sobbed hysterically, grasping the iron railing at his side. In a moment he got the better of himself and brushed the tears hastily away. Then a hand was laid upon his shoulder and he turned to see Ellen, her own eyes moist, and her face pale, looking up at him.

"Ellen!"

"Dick!"

That was all. At the end of the block the hospital corps with their stretchers were just passing out of sight. Steadman stood on the steps, leaning against the doorway. He grinned in a sheepishly good-natured manner at Ralston.

"Well, I found him!" the latter managed to announce in a fairly natural tone.

"So I see," answered Ellen, "and ready to report for duty."

"Well, I guess I'll say good-by," said Ralston awk-

wardly. "You people can have the cab as long as the horse lasts."

"No, you don't," said Steadman. "Remember you've agreed to put me at the head of my company. You haven't done it yet! Has he, Ellen?"

"No, we intend to take you with us to the ferry," she answered with a smile.

The word "we" sent a pang through Ralston's tired heart, and for an instant the sunlight paled before his eyes.

"Come, jump in, both of you," said Ellen.

She seemed very cheerful, and strangely enough, so did Steadman. Ralston wondered if when people cared like that just seeing each other again would have such a stimulating effect. For his own part he was too tired to speak. As they trotted slowly down Fifth Avenue Ellen and Steadman kept up a lively conversation. She admired his uniform, his sword, his belt; talked of the other men and officers she knew in the regiment, and of the chagrin of Lieutenant Coffin, when his captain should oust him from his temporary place at the head of the company. On Twenty-third Street, near Eighth Avenue, they overtook the regiment, and followed the remainder of the distance close behind the hospital corps. Then silence fell upon them. The actual parting loomed vividly just before them at the ferry.

Crowds of people, mostly small tradesmen and persons living in the neighborhood, had already begun to collect and follow the troops toward the place of embarkation. Ahead, the band was playing "Garry Owen," and the colors blazed in the sunlight. The regiment looked like a field of yellow corn waving in the breeze. About a hundred yards from the ferry house a few sharp or-

ders came down the line and the regiment halted—at "rest."

Steadman looked at his watch.

"Three minutes to seven," he said, snapping the case. "I guess the old man will drop when he sees *me*!"

"Just in time!" murmured Ellen.

"Drive along, cabby, to the head of the procession," added Steadman.

There was plenty of space to allow the hansom to pass near the curb, and they drove slowly along past the three battalions to where the colonel and his staff stood waiting for the gates to be opened. The band had ceased playing. The men laughed and jested, watching the lone hansom and its three occupants with interest.

At the stone posts by the entrance the cab stopped and Steadman shook hands with Ellen. The smile had gone from his face.

"Good-by, Ellen—good-by!"

"Good-by, John," she answered.

Ralston had turned away his head.

"Well, good-by, old man! Accept the prodigal's insufficient thanks. You're a brick, Ralston. Good-by!"

Beside the hansom Steadman paused for an instant and looked up.

"Don't forget what I said, Ellen! The fellow I spoke of is 'a prince.' Good-by!"

He turned and walked rapidly to where the colonel stood talking to the chaplain. All the fatigue had vanished from his step as he drew himself up before his commanding officer and saluted.

The staff had turned to him in amazement.

"I report for duty, sir!" he said simply.

The colonel stared at him for a moment.

"Take your company, sir!" he replied tartly.

Steadman saluted again, and grasping his sword ran down the line, while a wave of comment and ejaculation followed just behind him.

At this moment a whistle blew inside the ferry house, and a porter slowly swung the gates open.

The colonel drew his sword.

"Attention!" said he, glancing behind him.

"Attention!" ordered the lieutenant colonel.

"Attention!" shouted the majors.

As the regiment stiffened, Steadman stepped to the head of his company.

"Good morning, Mr. Coffin," he remarked nonchalantly.

"Good morning," replied the astounded lieutenant.

Then as the order flew down the line Steadman drew his sword.

"Attention!" he cried in a clear voice.

Behind the staff the drum major held his baton in air, and the musicians stood with their instruments at their lips ready for the order.

The colonel's eye flew down the line.

"Forward—" he cried.

Down came the drum major's baton. The band started "There'll be a Hot Time!"

"—March!" concluded the colonel, and, turning front, stepped ahead.

"Forward—march!" shouted the lieutenant colonel. The order was instantly repeated by the captains.

The battalion came to shoulder arms and moved forward.

"Horrard, Hutch! Horrard, Hutch!" howled the majors.

"Urrgh! Uhh! Huh! Huh!" yelled the captains.

Each company tossed its rifles into place, dressed down the line, marked step for a moment, and then flashed its hundred legs in unison to the band. The yellow field of corn once more wavered in the wind and blew slowly forward.

Ellen and Ralston sat motionless in the hansom as the battalions tramped by. At the head of his company marching with drawn sword, his head slightly bent and his gaze straight before him, came Steadman, but his eyes sought them not. The hospital corps with their stretchers brought up the rear and disappeared through the gates. The commissariat wagons followed stragglingly. The band could be heard dimly in the distance.

Then the whistle blew again and the man who had opened the gates ran out and closed them. The Twelfth had gone—with a full quota of officers.

"The Chilsworth," said Ralston, through the manhole.

The driver once more hitched the reins over the back of his moribund beast, and they started uptown.

"Dick," said Ellen suddenly, in a whisper, "Dick!"

He turned toward her inquiringly.

"Yes, Ellen?"

"I—I was mistaken last night," she said, coloring and looking away from him.

"What do you mean?" cried Ralston, his heart leaping.

"That—there was only one," she answered softly, smiling through her tears, "and — and — *it wasn't* John!"

The cabby grinned sleepily and silently closed the manhole, with a fatherly expression illuminating his corrugated countenance.

"Hully gee!" he muttered meditatively. "I mighta known there was a woman mixed up in it, somehow! Glad he got her!—Git on thar, you!"

Between the ferry houses the boat was swinging out into midstream, her decks crowded with yellow figures, and across the dancing waves the wind bore the faint strains of "Good-by, Little Girl, Good-by."

NOT AT HOME

"For I say this is death and the sole death,—
When a man's loss comes to him from his gain,
Darkness from light, from knowledge ignorance,
And lack of love from love made manifest."
—*A Death in the Desert.*

"HARRY might have stopped!" thought Brown, as a stalwart young man strode briskly past with a short "Good evening." "I've not had a chance to speak to him for a month." He hesitated as if doubtful whether or not to follow and overtake the other, then turned in his original direction. His delight in the scene about him was too exquisite to be interrupted even for a talk with his friend. Dusk was just falling. For an instant a purple glow lingered upon the spires of the beautiful gray cathedral whose chimes were softly echoing above the murmur of the city; then the light slipped upward and upward, until, touching the topmost point, it vanished into the shadows.

All about him jingled the sleighbells; long lines of equipages carrying richly dressed women moved in continuous streams in each direction; hundreds of lamps began to gleam in the windows and along the avenue; a kaleidoscopic electric sign, changing momentarily, flashed parti-colored showers of light across the housetops; big automobiles, full of gay parties of men and

women in enormous fur coats and grotesque visors, buzzed and hissed along; newsboys shrilly called their items; warm, humid breaths of fragrance rolled out from the florist's shops; and smells of confections, of sachet, of gasoline, of soft-coal smoke, together with that of roses and damp fur, hung on the keen air.

The greatest pleasure in Brown's life, next to his friendship for Harry Rogers, was his continuously fresh wonder at and appreciation for the complex, brilliant, palpitating life of the great city in which he, the taciturn New Englander, had come to live. The richness of his present experience glowed against the somber background of his past, touching emotions hitherto dormant and unrecognized. He realized as yet only the mysterious charm, the overwhelming attraction of his new surroundings; and every sense, dwarfed by inheritance, chilled by the east wind, throbbed and tingled in response. So far as Brown knew happiness this was its consummation and it was all due to Rogers. As Brown wandered along the crowded thoroughfare his mind dwelt fondly upon his friend. He recalled their chance introduction two years before at the Colonial Club in Cambridge, through Rogers's friend Winthrop, and how his heart had instantly gone out to the courteous and responsive stranger. That meeting had been the first shimmer of light through the musty chrysalis of Brown's existence.

Shortly afterwards he had given up his place in the English Department at Harvard at the suggestion of one of the faculty and accepted a position at Columbia. The professor had hinted that he was too good a man to wait for the slow promotion incident to a scholastic career in Cambridge, and had mentioned New York as offering

immeasurably greater opportunities. The advice had appealed to Brown and he had acted upon it.

He remembered how lonely he had been the first few weeks after his arrival. In that hot and sultry September the city had seemed a prison. He had longed for the green elms, the hazy downs, the earthy dampness of his solitary evening walks. One broiling day he had encountered Rogers on the elevated railroad. The latter had not recognized him at first, but presently had recalled their first meeting.

Brown in his enthusiasm had spoken familiarly of Winthrop, explaining in detail his own departure from Cambridge and his plans for the future. He was nevertheless rather surprised to receive within a week a note from Mrs. Rogers inviting him to spend a Sunday with them at their country place. What had that not meant to him!

At college he had taken high rank and was graduated at the top of his class, but he had made no friends. He would have given ten years of his life for a single companion to throw an arm around his shoulder and call him by his Christian name. He had never been "old man" to anybody—only "Mr. Brown." At night when he had heard the clinking of glasses and the bursts of laughter in the adjoining rooms as he sat by his kerosene lamp reading Milton or Bacon or "The Idio-Psychological Theory of Ethics," he would sometimes drop his books, turn out the light and creep into the hall, listening to what he could not share. Then with the tears burning in his eyes he would stumble back to his lonely room and to bed.

When he had achieved the ambition of his college days and by heartbreaking and unremitted drudgery had

secured a position upon the faculty, he had found his relations still unchanged. His shell had hardened. From Mr. Brown he had become merely "Old Brown."

And then how easily he had stepped into this other life! The Rogers had received him with open arms; their house had become the only real home he had ever known; and his affection for his new friends had blossomed for him almost into a romance. Even when Harry was busy or away, Brown would drop in on Mrs. Rogers of an evening and read aloud to her from his favorite authors. He tried to guide her reading and sent her books, and little Jack he loved as his own child.

The friendship, beginning thus auspiciously, continued for many months. Rogers put him up at the club and introduced him to his friends, so that Brown slipped into a delightful circle of acquaintances, and found his horizon broadening unexpectedly. Life assumed an entirely fresh significance, and although, by reason of a constitutional bluntness of perception, he failed utterly to discriminate between superficial politeness on the part of others and genuine interest, the world in which he was now living seemed to overflow with the milk of human kindness.

Brown had been making afternoon calls. The friendly cup of tea was to him a delightful innovation, and he cultivated it assiduously. He paused in front of a large corner house and hopefully ascended the steps.

"Not at 'ome," intoned the butler in response to his inquiry.

He turned down a side street, but no better success awaited him. He had found no one "at home" that afternoon. Usually he had better luck. But it was getting late and almost time to dress for dinner, and,

although Brown usually dined alone, he had become very particular about dressing for his evening meal. His heart was bursting with good nature as he sauntered along in the brisk evening air.

This New York was a great place! There rose before him the vision of his little room in the Appian Way in Cambridge. Had he remained he would be just about going over to Memorial for his supper at the ill-assorted and uncongenial "graduates' table" to which he had belonged. Jaggers would have been there, and the Botany man, and that fresh chap, who ran the business end of *The Crimson*, and was always chaffing him about society. He smiled as he thought of the quiet corner of the club, and of the little table with its snowy linen by the window, which he had appropriated.

In Cambridge he had passed long months without experiencing anything more stimulating than a Sunday afternoon call on a professor's daughter or an occasional trip into Boston for the theater, supplemented by a solitary Welsh rabbit at Billy Park's. Other men in the department had belonged to the Tavern Club, in Boston, or the Cambridge Dramatic Society, but he had never been asked to join anything, nor had he possessed the *entrée* even to the modest society of Cambridge. He was obliged to acknowledge—and it was in a measure gratifying to him to do so, since it threw his success into the higher relief—that judged by present standards his old life had been an absolute failure. No matter how genial he had tried to be, he had elicited little or no response. The days had been one dull round of tramping from his meals to lectures, and from lectures to the library. Although he had had no friends among his classmates, he had at least known their faces, but after

graduation he had found himself, as it were, alone among strangers. As time went on he had become desperately unhappy and his work had suffered in consequence.

Then he had come to New York. As if sent by Fate, Rogers had appeared, sought his companionship, made much of him. He began to think that perhaps he had misinterpreted the attitude of his quondam associates—they were such a quiet, prosaic, hard-working lot—so different from these debonair New Yorkers. And was not the cane they had presented to him on his departure a good evidence of their esteem? He swung it proudly. How well he recalled the moment when old Curtis had placed the treasure of gold and mahogany in his hands and, in the presence of his colleagues, had made his little speech, expressing their regret at losing him and wishing him all success. Then the others had clapped and cheered and he had stammered out his thanks. The presentation had been a tremendous surprise. Well, they were a good sort; a little dull, perhaps, but a good sort!

Then, too, he felt himself a better man for his association with Rogers and his friends. It was such a new sensation to be appreciated and made something of that he had grown spiritually broader and taller. It had been very hard in Cambridge, where he had felt himself neglected and passed over, not to be selfish and spiteful. His standards had imperceptibly lowered. He had "looked at mean things in a mean way." Here it was different. With genial, broad-minded associates he had become warm-hearted and liberal. His drooping ideals had reared their heads. He felt new confidence in and respect for himself. Now he looked the world squarely in the eye. His work was improving, and the faculty at

Columbia had expressed their appreciation of it. Life had never been so worth living. No one, he resolved, should ever suspect how small and narrow he had been before. He would always be the cheerful, generous, kindly chap for whom everybody seemed to take him. He had become a new man by reason of a little human sympathy.

"How busy people are!" he thought. "I guess I'll have another try at Rogers." He crossed the avenue, found the house, and rang the bell. The bay window of the drawing-room was on a level with where he stood, and he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Rogers sitting beside a cozy tea table, and of little Jack playing by the fire. The maid, slipping aside the silk curtain before opening the door, inspected the visitor.

"Mrs. Rogers is not at home," she remarked.

Brown was paralyzed at such open prevarication.

"I—I beg your pardon. But I think Mrs. Rogers is in."

"Mrs. Rogers is not receiving," curtly replied the maid.

Brown, vanquished but unconvinced, turned down the steps. At the bottom he stopped with a quick breath and glanced back at the house. Then he gave his trousers leg a cut with his gold-headed cane, and with a courageous whistle started up the avenue again.

He was a bit puzzled. He was sure he could have done nothing to displease his friends. It was probably just a mistake; they had visitors, perhaps, or the child was not well. He would call up Rogers on the telephone next day and inquire.

He walked to the boarding house and in the little hall bedroom he called "his rooms" put on the dinner

coat of which he was so proud. It had cost sixty dollars at Rogers's tailor. He had never owned anything of the sort before. When he had been invited out to tea in Cambridge, which had been but rarely, he had always worn a "cutaway."

He found Tomlinson, the club bore, in the coat room, invited him to dinner, and insisted on ordering a bottle of fine old claret. Tomlinson, in his opinion, was most clever and entertaining. After the meal his companion hurried away to an engagement, and Brown, lighting a cigar, strolled into the common-room, drew an armchair into the embrasure of a window, and sat there dreaming, at peace with all the world. The kindly faces of Rogers, his wife, and little Jack mingled together in a drowsy picture above the fragrant smoke wreaths. The bitterness of his past was all forgotten. The poverty and loneliness of his college days, the torture of his isolation in Cambridge, the regret for his youth's lost opportunities faded from his mind, and in their place he felt the warm breath of love and friendship, of kindness and appreciation, and the tiny clasp of the hand of little Jack. "God bless them all!" he closed his eyes. It seemed as though the boy were lying in his arms, the little head pressed against his shoulder. He held him tight and kissed the curly hair; his own head dropped lower; the cigar fell from his hand; behind the curtain Brown fell fast asleep.

Half an hour later into his dream floated the voices of Rogers and Winthrop. A slight draught of air flowed beneath the curtain. Some one struck a bell close by and ordered coffee and cigars, and the cracking of six or seven matches marked the number of those who had sat down together beside the window. He listened vaguely, too comfortably happy to disclose himself.

"You've got a lot of college men, I hear, in the district attorney's office," remarked one of the group, evidently to Rogers. "How do you like the work down there?"

"Oh, well enough," came the reply. "Trying cases is always interesting, you know. By the way, Win, speaking of college men, exactly who is your friend Brown?"

The dreamer behind the curtain smiled to himself. "Rogers may well ask that," he thought.

"Brown?" returned Winthrop. "You wrote me he was in New York, didn't you? Why, you must have known him in Cambridge. He was the great light of my class—don't you remember?—president of the 'Pudding,' stroked the 'Varsity, and took a commencement part besides. A kind of 'Admirable Crichton.' I'm glad you've seen something of him here."

There was silence for a moment or two. Obviously, thought Brown, Winthrop was confusing him with some one else.

"No, no!" exclaimed Rogers impatiently "*you* mean Nelson Brown; but he's on a tobacco plantation down in Cuba. The man I speak of is a little chap with a big head and protruding ears. You introduced me to him at the Colonial Club a year ago last spring."

"Oh, well, I may have done so," answered Winthrop. "I don't recall it. I think there was a fellow named Brown who used to hang around there—but he's no friend of mine. Who said he was?"

"Hang it! You did yourself, in your letter to me," came Rogers's retort.

"Nonsense! I was writing about Nelson!"

Rogers smothered an ejaculation more forcible than

elegant, but his annoyance seemed presently to give way to amusement, and he laughed heartily.

"Look here, boys, what do you think of this? Two years ago I run on to Cambridge, and while there happen to meet a chap named Brown. A year later he turns up on the Elevated and greets me like a long-lost brother. I mention the incident in a letter to Win. He replies that Brown is the finest thing that ever came down the pike. *He* refers to *Nelson* Brown. *I* suppose he means *my* Brown. Thereupon I take this unknown person to my bosom and place my home at his disposal. He promptly squats on the premises, drives my wife nearly frantic, bores all my friends to death, and in a short time makes himself an unmitigated nuisance. Fortunately, he hasn't asked me for money. Now, who the devil is he?"

"Don't know him from Adam!" said Winthrop.

"I know who he is," interjected one of the others. "Took a course of his on the 'Philology of Psychology' or the 'Psychology of Philology' or something. He's just an ass—a surly beggar—a sort of—of—curmudgeon!"

The window curtain trembled slightly, but no one noticed it.

"I can tell you rather a good story about Brown," spoke up a voice that had hitherto been silent. "You know I taught for a time in the English Department last year. Brown meant well enough, I guess, but he was an odd creature. His great ambition evidently was to get into society. Every Sunday he would put on his togs and call on all the unfortunate people he knew. Finally, everybody showed him the door. He got to be so intolerable that the department fired him, to our intense

relief. No one cared what became of him—so long as he only went. But Curtis—you remember old Curtis with the white hair and mustache?—he felt sorry for Brown and thought we ought at least to make a pretense of regret at having him leave. He suggested various things, but his ideas didn't arouse any sympathy, and we thought that was going to end the matter. Not a bit of it. Curtis went into town, all alone, and, although he is rather hard up himself, bought a gold-headed mahogany cane for forty-five dollars, and next day, when we were all at a department meeting, presented it to Brown, from the crowd, and got off a whole lot of stuff intended to cheer our departing friend. Of course we had to be decent enough to see the thing through, and Brown took it all in and almost wept when he thanked us. A few days afterwards Curtis came around and wanted us all to contribute to pay for the cane."

"Well!" responded Rogers. "Even my little boy knew there was something wrong with him the first time they met—children are like dogs, you know, in that way. Jack whispered to his mother while Brown was grimacing at him, 'Mamma, is that a gentleman?' Thought Brown was a gas man or a window cleaner, you know."

"Poor brute!" commented Winthrop. "Anyhow, Harry, your mistake has probably given him a lot of pleasure. No wonder he seized the opportunity. You can drop him by degrees so that, perhaps, he'll never suspect. Still, if he's as thick as you say he may give you trouble yet! Hello, it's a quarter past eight already! We shall have to run if we expect to see the first act. Come on, fellows!"

Half hidden behind the curtain in the window, Brown sat staring out into the night.

Hour after hour passed; the servants looked into the deserted room, observed him, apparently asleep, and departed noiselessly. One o'clock came, and Peter, the doorman, crossed over and touched him gently on the shoulder, saying that it was time to close the club. Brown mechanically arose, followed Peter to the coat room, and then, with eyes still fixed vacantly before him, silently passed out.

"You've left your cane, sir!" Peter called after him.

But Brown paid no heed.

A STUDY IN SOCIOLOGY

"I MOVE the case of the People against Ludovico Candido, indicted for murder," announced the assistant district attorney, addressing the court.

"Bring up Candido," shouted the captain to one of the attendants.

"Where's his lawyer?" inquired the clerk, glancing along the benches.

"I haven't seen him since morning," answered the assistant.

"Send to Mr. Fellini's office, at once," ordered the judge impatiently. "He has no business to delay the court."

At this moment the door in the rear of the room opened to admit a small dusty-looking Italian, stumbling along in advance of a tall, muscular policeman, and clutching nervously in both hands a battered, brick-stained felt hat. He was an emaciated, gaunt little fellow of about forty-five, with a thin mustache, pointed nose, and wild, rapidly shifting brown eyes. Under his open coat a red undershirt, unbuttoned at the neck, disclosed his sinewy chest. The nondescript trousers, which reached only to his ankles, terminated in huge, formless, machine-made shoes, the original color of which had entirely disappeared in favor of a dull whitish-green streaked with red.

He muttered beneath his breath as he saw the throng of strange faces, not knowing what was to happen next; but the attendant shoved him on without ceremony. Five years in America had taught him only twenty words of English, and for aught that he could tell this might well be the place of public execution. The rough, imperious lawyer who had consented to take his case on the instalment plan had not been to see him in over a week. This was because Maria had spent the first instalment on a little feast of chicken which she had cooked and brought to the Tombs in a newspaper for her husband, instead of taking the money to the attorney's office.

As Candido was half dragged, half pushed to the bar, a plump, white-skinned, clean-shaven man in a surtout entered the court room and thrust his way forward. Suddenly the prisoner uttered a choking cry and sank trembling to his knees, his locked hands raised to the judge in piteous appeal, while the attendants strove unsuccessfully to lift him to his feet.

"Madonna!" he cried in his native tongue. "O Madonna! I confess that I took the life of Beppe! *Salvatemi!*"

The begoggled, piebald-bearded interpreter who had taken his stand beside the defendant began to translate in a dramatic, stilted bellowing.

"He says: 'O Madonna, I confess——'"

"Here! Stop him! Stop that! Tell him to keep still. That won't do," interposed the assistant.

The interpreter gesticulated at the Italian, chattering volubly the while. Candido, staring like a frightened animal, allowed himself to be placed upon his feet, and stood clinging to the rail.

"Are you ready to proceed to trial?" sternly asked the court of the plump man in the surtout.

"I am not, your honor," replied the man. "I have not been paid."

Candido raised his hands in supplication. "*O giudice! Confesso——*"

The lawyer glanced at him contemptuously. "Shut up, you fool!" he growled in Italian.

"You have not been paid? That makes no difference. This is no time to throw over your client."

"I do not represent the prisoner," replied the other stubbornly. "If your honor cares to assign me as counsel, I shall be pleased to do so."

Candido, hearing the severity of the judge's tones, shook in every limb.

"So that is your game!" exclaimed his honor wrathfully. "You have induced this man to retain you as his lawyer, in order that now, on the plea that you have not been paid, you may induce me to assign you as counsel, and thus secure the five-hundred-dollar fee allowed by the State. A fine performance! I order you to proceed to trial!"

"Then I respectfully decline," retorted the other, turning toward the door.

The judge bit his lips in well-controlled anger. "Mr. District Attorney, prepare an order at once and serve it upon this attorney to appear before me to-morrow morning and show cause why he should not be punished for contempt of court. I will assign ex-Judge Flynn to the defense. Adjourn court until to-morrow morning." The judge rose and strode indignantly from the bench, while the jurors surged toward the entrance.

"Come on there," ordered the attendant. "You're goin' to get new lawyer. Lucky feller!"

But Candido with a shriek threw himself on the floor, clutching at the feet of the officers. "Madonna! Madonna! Is it indeed all over? Have they ordered me to execution? *Salvatemi!* Madonna!"

The grizzled interpreter stooped down and muttered in his ear: "Courage, my countryman! Nothing has occurred. They are to give you a better and more learned advocate."

Clinging to the arm of the attendant, Candido staggered toward the door leading to the prison pen. His face, ashen before, was now a dusky white. He understood nothing of this talk of advocates and adjournments. Let them but terminate his suspense. He was ready to expiate his offense. He had explained that to the lawyer. It was the will of God.

Close to the wire gate stood a young Italian woman with a shawl thrown about her slender shoulders, her hand holding that of a little child. "*Ludovico! Ludovico mio!*" she cried passionately. "Is it over? What has happened?"

Candido answered with a great gasping sob. "*Maria! Figlio mio!* I do not know!"

Candido sat at the bar by the side of the lawyer assigned to defend him. Over night in the Tombs he had been informed exactly what had been the meaning of the mysterious proceedings of the day before. The great advocate had intimated that there might still be a chance for him. After all, he had only killed another Italian, and American juries were merciful.

The case, the assistant told the jury in opening, was simple enough—plainly murder in the first degree. Giuseppe, or "Beppe" Montaro, the deceased, and Ludo-

vico Candido, the prisoner, had both come from the same town in Calabria and had been very old friends, although Beppe was the younger by some ten years. When Ludovico had sought his fortune in America, his wife Maria had remained behind; so had Beppe. Candido had been gone for five years, and had then sent for his wife. Beppe had come, too. In New York they all had lived together, Maria keeping house and taking a number of boarders. Then there had been a quarrel. The neighbors had said that Beppe did not always go out to work, or that sometimes he returned while Ludovico was away. One night Candido had closed the door in the face of his friend, who had sought lodgings elsewhere.

It appeared that, the day before the homicide, Candido had purchased a revolver which he had exhibited to his wife. A neighbor later had overheard her crying, and had asked what was the matter, to which she had replied: "Ludovico has bought a pistol. I fear it is for Beppe!" The next Sunday evening the defendant and Montaro had met in a wine shop, walked to Candido's house together, and in front of the door had had violent words. Then the husband had shot the lover.

It was as plain as daylight. There was the motive, the premeditation, the deliberation, and the intent. At the conclusion of the evidence the prosecution would ask for a verdict of murder in the first degree.

Candido's eyes strayed away from the young prosecutor, furtively seeking the corner where Maria and the child were sitting. He could not see them, owing to the throngs of neighbors huddled upon the benches. There were Petulano the baker, Felutelli the janitor, little Frederico the proprietor of the wine shop, Condesso, Pettalino, and Mantelli, with their wives, their sisters, and friends.

"Pietro Petrosino!" called the prosecutor. A lithe youngster slipped off the front bench smiling and made his way behind the jury box. The jury brightened instinctively as they caught sight of his picturesque figure, the round curly head, and the flush of the deep-olive complexion. Candido knew him for a gambler, cock-fighter, and worse. What plot could be brewing now? How did it come that this man was going to be a witness against him? How had the prosecution got hold of him?—this scum from Sicily, this man who knew less than nothing of the affair.

Pietro's black eyes sparkled innocently as he took the oath and threw himself gracefully across the armchair on the platform, the center of collective observation.

O Dio! He knew the defendant, yes, to his cost, he knew him! And Beppe, also. Alas! Poor Beppe! A fine statue of a man, a good man, a peaceable man! He also had been with them in the wine shop when the two had talked together apart from the others. No doubt Candido had had the pistol in his pocket at the very moment. They had whispered between themselves, their heads close together, "*like one who is being shriven,*" and Beppe had kissed the hand of Ludovico in friendship. Ludovico had returned the caress. Then the three had walked homeward, and from the darkness of the hallway Candido had shot out at Beppe—shot him *come un sacco* (like a bag). Pietro illustrated, taking the part of Beppe. He whispered, he kissed an imaginary hand, he walked, he fell—"like a bag!"

The jury listened entranced. It was like going to the theater, only better—much better, and cost nothing. Besides, afterward, they could turn down their thumbs or turn them up, as they might see fit. For a moment the

jury saw or thought they saw the whole thing—the perfidious hand-kissing assassin—then—

"*Bugiardo! Bugiardo!*" shrieked Candido, rising hysterically and tearing the air in impotent rage. "Liar! Liar! He was not there! He knows nothing! He is an enemy!"

"*Silenzio!*" cried the fantastically bearded interpreter.

"Keep still!" ordered a court officer, shaking the prisoner roughly by the shoulder. The jury were delighted. Pietro was entirely unconcerned. A rapid fire of Italian ran quickly along the benches.

Ludovico subsided into a little heap, his head sunk beneath his shoulders, the tears coursing down his cheeks. Madonna! Would they take the word of an enemy? Did they not know he was a Sicilian? What other hidden motive might not Pietro have? Candido stiffened and again turned to where he knew his wife must be sitting. Ah, that wretch! He had noticed his looks and glances. Candido ground his teeth, then dropped his head upon his arms.

"Maria Delsarto!" shouted the attendant.

Candido shivered and groaned aloud. They were calling his own wife to testify against him! He grew cold with terror. There was a conspiracy to get rid of him. The two had a secret understanding! What if she admitted having seen the pistol in his hands? And his threats! Now in truth it was all over! He settled himself stolidly, his eyes fixed upon the varnished table before him.

Maria came forward, carrying her babe in her arms —Ludovico's "*piccolo bambino!*" She was still young and slight; but cheeks a little sunken and lips a little set

told the story of her dire struggle with poverty. In her eyes glowed the beauty of her race, and their long lashes drooped on her pale cheeks as her lips moved automatically, repeating after the interpreter the words of the oath.

Candido did not raise his own eyes. For him all desire for life had vanished. His wife was about to sacrifice him for a new lover, a Sicilian! He sat motionless. The sooner it was done the better.

Maria let one hand lie gently on the arm of the witness chair, while with the other she caressed the sleeping child in her lap. Her gray shawl fell away from behind her head and showed a white neck around which hung a slender gold chain bearing a little cross. She looked neither at Candido nor at the jury. Then she took the little cross in her hand and glanced down at it.

"Your name?" asked the prosecutor.

"Maria Delsarto." Her voice was soft, musical, distinct.

"You are the wife of the defendant?"

"Yes, signore, and this is his child."

"Do you remember that the day before the homicide of Montaro your husband brought home a revolver?"

Candido's head disappeared beneath his arms and his body shook convulsively.

"No, he had no pistol."

The prisoner raised his eyes and shot a quick, puzzled look at his wife.

"What?" cried the assistant. "You say he had no revolver? Did you not swear that you saw one and sign a paper to that effect?"

Maria looked steadily before her. "I did not understand the paper. I saw no pistol." The words came quietly, positively.

The prosecutor looked helplessly toward the judge and nervously fingered an affidavit.

"You cannot impeach your own witness, Mr. District Attorney," admonished his honor.

The prosecutor turned again to Maria. "Did you not tell Sophia Mantelli that you were weeping because your husband had purchased a revolver with which to kill Beppe?"

"Objected to!" shouted Flynn.

"I will allow it," said his honor, "on the ground of refreshing memory. The witness may answer."

"No," answered Maria in the same quiet voice.

The prosecutor threw down the affidavit in disgust. That was what you got for taking the word of one of these Italians! Well, it would be a lesson! No, he had no more questions. Candido began to chatter at his lawyer and fell to nodding and smiling at Maria, who seemed to see him no more than before.

Flynn rose deliberately, cleared his throat, and elevated and stretched his arms as if to secure freer action, exhibiting during the operation a large pair of soiled cuffs.

"Do you know Pietro, What's-his-name?" he inquired sharply.

Maria flushed and her head sank toward the child. "Yes," she murmured.

"You have heard him testify that he saw the killing of Montaro?"

"Yes."

"Do you know where he was at that time?"

Maria's head fell so low that her face could not be seen, and her hand sought the cross upon her bosom.

"Answer the question!" cried Flynn roughly.

"He was with me when we heard the shots below." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "He had been there for an hour. He was not with Ludovico at all. He saw nothing."

An excited chatter flew around the benches. The handsome Pietro sat dumfounded.

Candido started from his chair, his face livid with passion, his eyes glaring. "*Traditrice!* It is thus you deceive me! It is well that I should die. Faithless betrayer!"

In the hysteria of the moment he entirely overlooked the value of the testimony in his behalf. The attendant and the distinguished Flynn thrust him down, and the interpreter hurled at him a torrent of remonstrances. Once more the prisoner buried his face in his hands. Maria, still hanging her head, left the chair, and with her babe in her arms sought a distant corner of the court room.

With the testimony of an officer that a button photograph of Maria had been found pinned inside the coat of Montaro, the prosecution closed its case. The assistant district attorney sat down. The jury shifted their positions. The distinguished Flynn rose to make motions that the case be taken from the jury. It was plain, he argued in sonorous and reverberating tones, that the prosecution had impeached its principal witness by the testimony of the defendant's wife, Maria Delsarto. It had raised a reasonable doubt on its own evidence. There was nothing upon which the jury could predicate a verdict. He asked that they be directed to acquit. Was his motion denied? With an expression of well-simulated surprise, he made the other stereotyped motions. The court denied them all.

Candido saw and trembled. That shaking of the head could mean only one thing! Well, they would let him see the priest first—before they did it.

"Take the chair!" came Flynn's harsh voice from above.

"The chair!" *La sedia!* Madonna! He knew that word. So soon then? He stiffened with horror. A chilly perspiration broke out all over his body. The room swam and darkness surged across his bewildered vision.

"Take the chair!" repeated the voice.

"*La sedia!*" bellowed the interpreter. "*La sedia!*"

Candido shivered as with ague. His teeth chattered. *Dio!* Now?

The attendant placed a hand upon his shoulder. Candido uttered a terrible cry, and fell senseless to the floor.

A long adjournment, a talk with the priest, an explanation from the interpreter, and Candido "took the chair," telling his own story in a fluent but listless monotone. He spoke of his father and mother, of his home in Calabria, of Maria whom he had known from childhood. His speech was soft and dejected. Then he told of Beppe—Beppe, the great, coarse, bullying brute who had tormented and abused him! Yet he had never retaliated until the other had sought to ruin his home. Then he had refused him access. Montaro had publicly sworn to be revenged, declaring that he would kill him and marry his widow.

Candido gritted his teeth and shook his curved fingers, uttering various *staccato* adjectives. Then he recovered himself, and in a different tone began to speak slowly

and with great care, pausing after each sentence. From time to time he looked to observe the effect of his testimony upon the distinguished Flynn. That night in the wine shop Montaro had called him aside and in the most insulting manner warned him of his approaching fate. He would be dead within a week, and Maria would belong to another. Then in mockery Montaro had bent over his hand as if to administer a caress and had *bitten* it—the deadliest of affronts. Candido had hurried out of the shop toward his home, closely followed by Montaro. At the door of the tenement his enemy had rushed upon him with a drawn knife from behind, and to save his own life Candido had fired at him.

"He was a bad man—*un perfido*. He would have killed me and taken my wife from me had I not killed him," continued the defendant. As for this Pietro, he had not been there at all. He was an enemy, a Sicilian.

In response to a question of the assistant, he explained that the pistol was an old one. He had not bought it to kill Montaro. He had had it for four or five years. Had procured it for safety when working on the railroad.

By degrees Candido recovered from his listlessness. He no longer seemed careless as to the result of the case. A new strong thirst for life had taken possession of him. There was an air of frankness about the weather-beaten little countenance, and a trustful look in the brown eyes that served far better than "character witnesses" to convince the jury of his ingenuousness. There was no doubt as to his having made an impression.

The distinguished Flynn patted him on the back as he took his seat and felt greatly encouraged. These Italians were great actors—and no mistake!

But the prosecution had reserved a bombshell for

"The distinguished Flynn burst into a deluge of oratory."

the last, intended to annihilate the testimony of the defendant and neutralize the effect of his personality upon the jury. The assistant called in rebuttal a salesman from a large retail fire-arm store, who testified positively that the pistol in evidence had been purchased the day before the homicide. Flynn turned to the attendant, whom he knew well and cursed. These Guineas! Bought the day before! He had all the air of one who has been grossly and inexcusably deceived. He scowled at Candido, who quailed before him.

"How long do you want to sum up, gentlemen?" inquired the court. "Will twenty minutes each be sufficient?"

The distinguished Flynn burst into a deluge of oratory in which Self-Defense and The Unwritten Law played opposite one another, neither yielding precedence. His client was a hero! The instinct of every true American, of every husband, of every father, must stamp his deed as one blameless in the eyes of the Almighty, and worthy not of censure but of the approval of all honest men and lovers of virtue. At the risk of his own life he had preserved the integrity of his home and the honor of his wife. At the same time he had rid the community of a villain. Never, while the Stars and Stripes floated above their heads would an American jury on this sacred soil, consecrated by the blood of those who sacrificed their lives to liberty, etc.— He subsided, panting and mopping his forehead.

The assistant rose to reply. This explanation of the defendant that he had killed in self-defense was the last despairing effort of a guilty man to escape the consequences of his horrible crime. Of course the prisoner's own evidence was valueless. Jealousy! Calm, calculating

jealousy! That was the key to this awful act. The tell-tale picture on Montaro's coat, the crimson admissions of the defendant's wife, the purchase of the pistol—all spoke for themselves. The prosecutor paused.

"Sympathy is not for the assassin," he concluded. "Think rather of his innocent victim! On the sunny shores of Calabria sits a woman, old and gray, to whom this Beppe is her joy, her pride, who thinks of him by day working in the great America across the seas, and whose heart, as the time for the harvest draws near and the exiles are coming back to work in the fields, will beat with expectation. The others will come. Father will meet daughter, and mother will meet son, and they will tell of their life in the great country of Freedom; but for her there will be no gladness—her Beppe will return no more."

The assistant sank into his seat. Candido was staring at him with wide eyes. He knew the *avvocato* had been talking about Calabria. Madonna! Would he ever see it again?

"Gentlemen of the jury," began his honor. "I shall first define the various degrees of murder and manslaughter."

The sun fell lower and lower over the Tombs as the judge continued his charge. The jury twisted uneasily in their chairs. Candido grew tired. This interminable flow of talk! Why did not the judge say what should be done to him at once? Millions of motes swam in the sun, and with his head resting on his forearms he watched them idly. He had always loved the sun. A warm lassitude stole over him. On Sundays he had spent whole mornings curled up on a bench in Seward Park with Maria and the *bambino* beside him. How funnily

the motes danced about! He smiled drowsily at them. Some were so tiny as to be almost invisible, and some were really large—if you half closed your eyes and one got near it seemed almost as big as a cat—fluffy like a cat. Those little, tiny motes would float out of nowhere into the band of sunshine and sink and dart across it, vanishing into nothingness. Candido amused himself by blowing millions of them into eternity. He himself was just like that. Out of the black, into the warm sun for a little while, and then—pouf!

There was a tremendous scuffling of feet beside him, and the jury rose and filed out. The noise brought him back out of his dream to the realities again. They were going away! Judgment had been pronounced! The judge bowed solemnly to the retreating foreman. Again the fierce chill of overwhelming animal fear seized him. An officer approached. Madonna! He could not pass into the black like the motes, he could not! And he was as yet unshriven! With his frail little body vibrating like a framework of slender steel, he turned and faced the officer, panting with fear, his eyes darting fire.

"Aw, come along!" growled the attendant, raising his hand to seize him by the arm.

"I cannot die unshriven!" shrieked Candido, and flung himself furiously upon the officer, biting, kicking, scratching, until, nearly fainting from his paroxysm of terror and in a coma of exhaustion, he allowed himself to be carried away by three burly Irishmen.

"Bring up the defendant!" directed the court. The jury were already in and waiting for the prisoner. The Italians had all been hustled out into the corridor. His honor had no mind for any sort of demonstration.

The light still poured through the great windows, and the sky was a deep sunny blue over the Tombs. Resisting, clutching at sills and railing, hanging by his arms, Candido was carried in and held bodily at the bar.

"Jurors, look upon the defendant. Defendant, look upon the jurors. How say you, do you find the defendant guilty or not guilty?" asked the clerk grandiloquently.

"Not guilty," answered the foreman distinctly, and with a shade of defiance in his voice.

"Listen to your verdict as it stands recorded," continued the clerk, unaffected. "You find the defendant not guilty, and so say you all."

"Any other charges against the prisoner?" inquired his honor.

"Not yet," replied the assistant with sarcasm.

Suddenly Candido began again. "Madonna! Save me! I confess that I killed Beppe, my countryman——"

The bifurcated interpreter jabbered furiously at him. An expression of dumb amazement overspread the dusty little face.

"You are free, acquitted, discharged; you may return to your home!" announced the beard dramatically, waving a hand in the direction of the door. The officers lowered Candido slowly to his feet. He picked up his hat. Abject wonder was painted upon his countenance. He gazed from the judge to the jury, and back again to the prosecutor.

"Madonna! I am pardoned for killing Beppe? *O giudici*, I kiss your hands." He seized that of the interpreter and devoured it with kisses. Then with a smile he added: "Ah, you see I could not but kill him! He had ruined my home! He had deprived me of honor!"

"He caught sight of the waiting Maria."

The attendants faced him toward the door, and he started slowly away; but before he had taken half a dozen steps he caught sight of the waiting Maria. His face changed. Once more he turned to the interpreter and muttered something hoarsely beneath his breath.

"He says," translated the interpreter, turning to the court," that he would like to have his pistol."

THE LITTLE FELLER

FIVE feet high, in a suit of clothes three sizes too large for him, he stood in the doorway of my office impassively examining a card which he held in his hand and looking doubtfully about the room.

"I want to see the assistant district attorney," he said.

"Well, this is the right place," I answered in as encouraging a tone as I could assume.

"I want to see you—to speak with you. That lawyer company——"

"Oh, the Legal Aid? What do you want to see me about?"

"The little feller," he replied, taking a step forward and grasping his flat Derby hat firmly before him with both hands.

"What's the trouble?"

"It's the little feller—Isaac—they have arrested him for larceny." He spoke the words in a matter-of-fact—rather hopeful—altogether engaging manner.

"Larceny, eh! How old is he?"

"Eight. But he didn't do nothin'. He was out with some bad boys, but he didn't do nothin' and the cop arrested him with the others. That's all. I came down to get him off, if I could." He smiled frankly.

"What's your name?" I inquired, for ingenuousness of that sort is uncommon among the Jews.

"Abraham Aselovitch—my father is Isidore and my mother she is Rachael Aselovitch."

"And this little fellow—is he your brother?"

"Sure."

"When does his case come up?"

"Next Monday in the Children's Court." He shifted his position.

"Well, even if he is found guilty they will probably only send him to the Juvenile Asylum."

"That's it—Juvenile Asylum. It's a bad place. I don't want him to go there," replied the boy with determination.

"Why not, Abraham?" I inquired.

"It is a bad place. He will meet bad boys there—like the ones that got him into trouble," he responded with an eager look.

"It's not such a bad place," I ventured.

"I know what it is!" he retorted fiercely. "They make criminals there. Good boys are put in with the bad. It makes no difference. One makes the other bad. Isaac is a *good* boy."

"How about the evidence?"

"I think they will convict him," remarked Abraham conclusively. "Those cops will swear to anything."

"Oh, it isn't as bad as that," I answered with a smile. "Still, I'm afraid I can't get him off, particularly if the evidence would warrant his conviction. After all, perhaps the Juvenile is the best place for him, or maybe" (the thought struck me) "they will parole him in the custody of his mother."

"No, they won't!" he cried with harsh vindictive-

ness. "She *wants* him to go there. The little feller, he makes too much trouble for her. She don't want that she should have to clean up after him. She don't want to have to cook for him." His eyes filled. "My mother, she has no use for the little feller—but he's all I've got."

"Do you work?"

"Sure, every morning I go with my father at six o'clock, and I work all day until seven. Then I come home, and the little feller is lying in my bed and I put my arms around him and go to sleep."

"Six until seven!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, that is the time my father works, and I work for him—on the pants."

"My God! A sweatshop!" I murmured. "Don't you ever have any fun?"

"Sure I do. Saturdays we don't do no work an' I take the little feller down to Coney, an' sit on the sand all day with him. Do we have fun? Well, say, I guess!"

"What does your father give you a week?"

"Sometimes a dollar. Sometimes a dollar and a half. Sometimes nothin'."

"What does your father say about putting Isaac in the asylum?"

"My father!" answered Abraham, his eyes flashing. "*He* don't want him. Isaac won't work. He's an *American* boy. He's only eight. He just hangs around the house and musses things up and won't do nothin' they tell him. My father would be glad to get rid of him."

"Well, if he makes all this trouble, why do you want to keep him?" I asked.

"Because I love him!" responded Abraham with a sob. "He's all I've got—that little feller. I want him

to grow up a good boy. If they don't want to take care of him, *I will*. I'll earn the money. I'll send him to school, maybe, by and by, and make a *lawyer* of him." Abraham spoke eagerly. "The old folks, my father and mother, they ain't like me and you, they ain't real Americans, they don't understand these things. All they think about is work and the synagogue. I'm up against it, I know. I've got to work. But the little feller—I want that little feller to come out on top and have a chance."

"McCarthy," said I to the county detective assigned to the office, "kindly step into the next room. I want to speak to this boy alone.

"Abraham, you are up against it, I guess. Don't you think you can go without the little feller for a year? I'll do what I can, but even if he goes up they won't keep him longer than that at the asylum, and probably when he comes out he'll be more of a help to your father and mother."

The big tears stood in his eyes and he twisted his hands together as he answered:

"I guess—maybe—maybe, I could give up going down to Coney for a year, if it was going to do him any good. Don't you think the asylum's so bad?"

"No, indeed," said I. "It's fine. He can learn to play in the band. He'll have a good time. Let him go."

For an instant I thought my words had made an impression. Then the two tears welled over.

"You don't know—" the voice was low and passionate—"you don't know what it is to have nothin' but a little feller like that. And way off there—he would wake up in the night maybe—all alone—a little feller——"

"Abraham!" I exclaimed, "the Juvenile be hanged! I'll see the judge and do my best to have the little fellow

remanded in the custody of his brother. And Abraham——"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is the little feller? Out on bail?"

"Yessir."

I fumbled in my pocket for a dollar bill.

"Will you be paid for to-day?" I asked.

"No, there's nothin' doin' to-day," he answered.

"Had any work this week?"

"Nothin' much this week. There ain't much doin' at the shop. I won't get paid this week."

"Well," I continued, "the little feller is free till Monday, anyhow. Take him down to Coney to-morrow. And see here, Abraham, just *spend* that dollar. Be a good sport." He grinned. "Take the little feller along and sit on the sand, and if there is anything you want to see, no matter if it costs five cents or ten cents, you go in and see it. Have a real good time. Something for the little fellow to remember."

He smiled out of his eyes a heaven-born smile.

"Thank you."

"Never mind that, just do as I say. And Monday you go to court with him. I'll see what I can do."

"You bet I will. I'll take the little feller down there to-morrow. You ought to see him, Mister. Some time I'll bring him in here."

He shook hands and turned to open the door. As it closed behind him, there echoed faintly through the transom:

"Just wait till you see that little feller!"

RANDOLPH, '64

"For the good and the great, in their beautiful prime,
Through thy precincts have musingly trod—"

THE roll of the national anthem died away and the veterans stood with bowed heads while the chaplain pronounced the benediction. Then the color bearer elevated the regimental flags, the drums tapped, and the gray-haired soldier boys, in straggling twos, marched slowly out of Saunders's Theater, through the flower-bedecked transept, and into the broad sunshine of Memorial Day. Ralph and I lingered in our seats until the crowd had thinned. In the flag-draped balcony above the platform the members of the band were hurriedly departing with their impedimenta; here and there little old ladies dressed in gray, were making their way with tardy steps toward the side exit; while all around the theater the open windows poured in a battery of mote-filled sunshine upon the deserted benches. The air was heavy with the soft fragrance of the elms outside, the faint odor of starched linen, of pine dust, and of flowers.

"There's a pair for you!" whispered Ralph, as an erect old gentleman accompanied by a white-haired negro came up the aisle. "I wish I knew who they were." He offered to wager large sums, based upon his alleged capacity for divination, that they were an "old grad,"

a Southerner, probably, and his body servant—"Old Marse" and "Uncle Ned." He instantly saw visions of them as characters in a story he was writing for one of the college papers. He is an imaginative boy.

We followed them out into the transept, and waited in the jog by the entrance while they made the round of the tablets, the white man reading the various inscriptions to his companion, who now and then would nod as if in recollection, and once furtively wiped his eyes with a frayed red-bordered silk handkerchief. The last we saw of them, they were picking their way across the car tracks of Cambridge Street in the direction of the Yard.

All the long spring afternoon, as we lay on the grass with our backs against the tree trunks, pretending to study, but really only watching the little gray denizens of the Yard intent upon their squirrel business, Ralph was making up stories about "Old Marse" and "Uncle Ned." I don't believe the chap read a line of his Stubbs on "Mediæval Architecture," and he was very loath to join me when I dragged him to his feet and said that it was time for supper.

Darkness had fallen when, two hours later, we joined the group of men gathered under the elms around the main entrance of Holworthy, where the Glee Club had assembled for one of its evening concerts. Everywhere the old buildings gleamed with light, for the examinations were on, and each window had its cluster of coatless occupants, who from time to time vociferously participated in mournful, lingering calls for "M-o-r-e." The odor of pipe smoke mingled with the sweet, humid breath of the grass and the subtle perfume of professors' gardens from distant Quincy Street; in the western sky a crescent moon, just peeping from behind the tower of Massachu-

setts Hall, shyly nestled in the tree tops; while between the great elms we could look, as we lay flat upon our backs, into an infinity of faintly twinkling worlds. Between songs you could hear the creaking of the pump in front of Hollis Hall, and the tinkle of the cup upon its chain as it was tossed heedlessly away by the thirsty wayfarer after he had availed himself of its humble services. Ralph and I, joyously entangled in the anatomy of a dozen classmates, drank in with rapture the never cloying melodies of "Johnnie Harvard," "The Miller's Daughter," "The Independent Cadets," and "A Health to King Charles," none of which old favorites escaped without a second rendition, and it was well on to nine o'clock when with a last

> Here's a health to King Charles,
> *Fill him up* to the brim!

the assemblage broke up, in spite of savage disapproval from the windows.

Then only did we surrender to our miserable apprehension of the imminent, deadly "exam." in Fine Arts 4, and with the earnestly avowed purpose of really mastering the difference between a gargoyle and a lintel before we retired to rest, reluctantly mounted the stone steps recently vacated by our musical brethren. Our room was Number 10, the first as you go in on the right, and the flickering gaslight in the hall showed that the door, in acordance with inviolable custom, was still ajar.

"Wait a second while I light the lamp," I remarked to Ralph, and, feeling my way across the room to my desk, stood there fumbling for the matches. As I did so I was startled to hear a voice from the darkness in the direction of the fireplace.

"I beg your pardon," it said. "I'm afraid I have usurped your room, but the door was open and its invitation was too attractive to be refused."

The match flared up and I saw before me Ralph's "Old Marse."

"Oh—of course—certainly," I replied. He had arisen from the armchair in which evidently he had been listening to the singing. Then the wick caught, and by the increased light I saw that the man before me looked older than he had in the morning. His hair was almost white, and his face about the eyes finely wrinkled, but its expression was full of kindly humor, and I felt somehow that this stranger quite belonged there, and that it was I who was the intruder.

"You see," he continued with a smile, "I feel that I have a certain right to be here. This used to be my room. Let me introduce myself. Curtis is my name—Curtis, '64."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Curtis," said I. "I'm Jarvis, 190—. Was this really your room? That seems an awfully long time ago."

He smiled again.

"I'm afraid it seems longer ago to you than to me. Would you mind if I should smoke a cigar with you? I'd like to ask you some things about the old building."

"Please do," said I. "And let me introduce my roommate, Ralph Hughes."

Ralph shook hands with Mr. Curtis, and we all sat down around the fireplace. It seemed rather inhospitable not to be able to offer him any refreshments, but there was only one bottle of beer in the *papier-maché* fire pail in my bedroom, and it was warm at that. Hence we accepted our guest's cigars with some diffidence and

awaited his first interrogation. I could see that Ralph was brimming over with eagerness to ask about "Uncle Ned" and a hundred other things which that romantic ostrich of a boy had invented during the afternoon, and I felt quite sure that before Mr. Curtis got away he would be obliged to pay heavily for the temerity of his visit by being offered up upon the altar as a sacrifice to Ralph's bump of acquisitiveness.

"Yes," said Mr. Curtis, "this was my room for four years. If you look over on the windowpane I think you'll find my name scratched on the glass in the lower left-hand corner. I wonder if that old picture of the Belvoir Fox Hunt, that I left, is still here?"

"Oh, was that yours?" exclaimed Ralph. He darted into the bedroom and unhooked a framed lithograph which had been the joy and pride of the occupants of the room for the past four decades. Mr. Curtis turned it round and pointed to his name in faded ink upon the back at the head of a long line of indorsements, each of which represented a temporary possessor.

"The old room seems about the same. The wall-paper has been changed, but that big crack over by the bedroom I remember well. And there ought to be a bullet hole in the frame of the door."

"A bullet hole!" exclaimed Ralph and I in unison.

"Yes," said Mr. Curtis quietly, "a bullet hole—a thirty-two caliber, I should judge."

Ralph seized the lamp and, holding it high above his head, carefully scrutinized the woodwork of the door.

"There it is!" he cried eagerly. "Right in the middle; and, by George, there's the bullet, too! There's a story about that, I bet—isn't there? Who fired it? How did it get there?"

He replaced the lamp, quivering with interest.

"A story if you like," responded Mr. Curtis, looking curiously out of his laughing brown eyes at my impetuous roommate. "Yes, quite a little story. I could hardly tell you about it unless I told you also something of the man who fired the shot. Did you ever hear of Randolph? Randolph, '64?"

The blank look which came into our faces rendered answer unnecessary.

"Never heard of Randolph, '64! *Sic fama est!* I suppose some Jones or Smith or Robinson now holds his place. Outside of Prex himself, there wasn't a better-known figure in my time. Why, he occupied this very room. He was my roommate."

"Did he, though!" ejaculated Ralph. "How did he come to be firing a pistol around? Didn't he fall foul of the Yard policeman?"

"There were no Yard policemen in those days," said Mr. Curtis.

"What luck!" ejaculated Ralph. "Do tell us about Randolph!" he pleaded in the same breath.

"Certainly. If you really wish it. I trust you fellows haven't any examinations to-morrow."

"Examinations be hanged!" exclaimed Ralph.

"Well," began Mr. Curtis meditatively, "I remember as if it were only yesterday being awakened one bright September morning in '60 by the sound of a rich negro voice singing in time to the scuff-scuff of the blacking of a pair of shoes. The sound entered the open window through which the autumn sun was already pouring, and penetrated the stillness of my bedroom, over there. I sprang out of bed and, thrusting my head out of the window, beheld, seated comfortably upon the topmost step, a

comically visaged darky, clad in a pair of brown overalls and battered felt hat, busily engaged in putting the finishing touches to a highly polished pair of russet riding boots. Piled indiscriminately upon the sidewalk, in front of the windows of the room opposite, lay several huge trunks, while at the foot of the steps reposed a long wicker basket, before which were ranged in order of height an astonishing collection of riding boots and shoes of all varieties, upon which the disturber of my dreams had evidently been hard at work, since they shone with a luster glorious to behold. The negro, having critically examined the boot upon his arm, and evidently satisfied with its condition, arose to place it by the side of its mate, and in so doing caught sight of me. Instantly he had doffed his old gray hat and was making a grave salutation.

"'Good mornin', suh.'

"For a moment this vision of darky courtesy deprived me of my ordinary self-possession. Then his grin became contagious.

"'I heard you singing and thought I'd look out to see who it was. Do you know who those trunks belong to?'

"'Dose? Why, dose is Marse Dick's. Oh, p'r'aps you ain't met Marse Dick—Marse Dick Randolph, ob Randolph Hall, Virginny, suh.' He drew himself up with conscious pride. 'We-uns jes' come las' night. Marse Dick's rooms is in dar'—nodding toward the window—'en I wuz jes' a-lookin' ober some ob his traps. Anyt'ing I kin do fo' you, suh? Glad to be of any service, suh. I'se Marse Dick's boy—Moses—Moses March, suh.'

"'Well, Moses,' I answered, 'I'm glad to make your acquaintance. You can tell Mr. Randolph that if he is going to be a neighbor of mine I shall call upon him at the earliest opportunity.'

"'Yah, suh. T'ank you, suh,' responded Moses.

"Just then the old bell on Harvard Hall began to clamor for the morning chapel service, and realizing that the master of my new acquaintance might be unfamiliar with college regulations, I called out:

"'You'd better wake Mr. Randolph or he'll be late for chapel.'

"'Call Marse Dick!' exclaimed the darky in apparent horror. 'Golly, I darsn't call Marse Dick 'fo' ten o'clock. Why, he'd skin me alive. 'Sides, he tole me to bring roun' Azam 'bout ten o'clock.'

"'Azam?' I queried.

"'Yah, suh; Azam's Marse Dick's hunter. Bes' Kentucky blood, suh. Sired by ole Marse's stallion Satan, out o' White Clover. Dar's a hunter fo' you, suh. You jes' ought ter see Marse Dick a-follerin' de hounds. 'Scuse me, suh, fo' keepin' you a-waitin'. No, suh, t'ank you, suh; I won't forgit de card, suh.'

"Hastily retiring to my bedroom I threw on my clothes and then hurried off to chapel. The shades of Number 9, the room across the hall, were still tightly drawn."

Mr. Curtis stopped and relit his cigar. The yellow sash curtains on their sagging wires softly bellied in the night breeze, and through the open windows came the distant chanting of the Institute march and the tinkle of the pump.

"This very room!" repeated the old gentleman half to himself. "And this very window!" His voice sank dreamily and he seemed for the moment to have forgotten our presence. "Those were happy times. As I look back over the forty years, the time I spent here seems one long vista of glorious autumn days. The same old

red-brick buildings; the same green velvet sward; that old tolling bell; the gravel walks; the pump—I remember there always used to be a damp place about ten feet square about the pump; the old creaking stairs outside this very door; the quiet evenings on the steps where those jolly chaps were singing; the long talks before this very fireplace under the lamplight with Dick; and then that fatal rupture with the South! How little it means to you! Why, it is isn't even a dream. It's just tradition. I suppose you feel it—you can't help feeling it. But if you had sat here, as I did, with the fellows going away, and the company drilling on the Delta over there—what do you call it now: the Delta?—and had shared the feverish enthusiasm which we all felt, tempered by the sorrow of losing our comrades; the little scenes when they went off one by one, and we gave each fellow a sword or some knickknack to carry with him; and the long, sad, anxious days when you waited breathless for news—and then, when it came, often as not, had felt a pang at your heart-strings because some fellow that you loved had got it at Bull Run, or Antietam, or Cold Harbor! No, you can never know what that meant, and thank God you can't. The rest is about the same. I see you have squirrels in the Yard now. We never had any squirrels. I suppose you sit in these windows and watch 'em by the hour. Busier than you, I guess.

"But apart from the squirrels and the new buildings, the old place is about the same—bigger, more imposing, of course, with its modern equipment of museums and laboratories and all that, and best of all that splendid monument with its transept full of memories. But it's not the same to me. It's only when I turn toward the corner by Hollis and Stoughton, as I did this afternoon,

with Holden Chapel just peeping in between, and the big elms swinging overhead, and, shutting my ears to the rattle of the electric cars, listen to the sound of the same old clanging bell, with the sun gilding the tree trunks and slanting along the gravel pathways, that I can call back those dear old days. Then it seems as if I were back in '61."

In the pause which followed Ralph volunteered that we all did feel somewhat of the same thing, only in a minor degree. He had often imagined the fellows going off to the war and had wondered if it was anything like what he supposed. He pattered on in his own peculiar way trying to put our guest at ease and, as he expressed it later, to cheer him up. It would never have done, he averred later in his own defense, to let "Old Marse" get groggy over the "sunlit elms." However, Mr. Curtis changed the tone himself.

"And now to come to that first time that I ever saw Randolph. I had just come from tea and was sauntering along the Yard in front of Stoughton when I became conscious that my customary place upon the steps, out there, had been usurped. The trunks and paraphernalia of the morning had disappeared, and although Moses was absent, I knew somehow that this could be no other than 'Marse Dick.' He was tall, with muscular back and shoulders, and his clothes of dark-blue serge hung on him as if they had grown there. His feet were encased in long-toed vermilion morocco slippers, and the other elements of his costume which caught my eye were a yellow corduroy waistcoat, very faddish for those days, and a flowing red cravat. A broad-brimmed black slouch hat was well pulled down over his eyes, while from beneath protruded a long brierwood pipe

from which voluminous clouds of smoke rolled forth upon the evening air without causing any annoyance, so it seemed, to an enormous mastiff, who sat contentedly between his master's knees, blinking his eyes and thumping his tail in response to the caresses of the hand upon his head. As I drew near the dog stalked over to meet me, sniffing good-naturedly, and the stranger stepped down, removed his hat, and held out his hand with a smile of greeting.

"'Mr. Curtis, I believe, suh?' he said in a low but agreeable drawl. 'My boy Moses gave me the card you were kind enough to send by him this morning. We are neighbors, are we not?'

"I had rather expected to see the face of a dandy, but instead a pair of black eyes under almost beetling black brows burned steadily into mine. He looked nearer thirty than twenty, and this appearance of maturity was heightened by a tiny goatee. His smile was straightforward and honest, the forehead, under the curly black locks, low and broad, the nose aquiline and the skin dark and ruddy. Yes, he was a very pretty figure of a man—as handsome a lad as one would care to meet on a summer's day—part pirate, part Spanish grandee, part student, and every inch a gentleman. Later there were plenty of fellows who said that no man could dress like that (we were all soberly arrayed in those days) and be a gentleman; or that no one could come flaunting his horses and dogs and niggers into Cambridge, as Randolph undoubtedly did, and be one; or could parade around the Yard smoking real cigars and keep dueling pistols on his mantel and rum under the bed, as Dick did, and be one. But he was, boys, he was!

"Perhaps he did talk too much about his niggers and

his acres; too much about his old mansion and its flower gardens, about stables, fox-hunting and fiddlers—what of it? The point was that we were a lot of soul-starved, psalm-singing Yankees, talking through our noses and counting our pennies; while Randolph was a warm-hearted, hot-headed, fire-eating, cursing Virginian.

"We shook hands and I joined him on the steps. It was just such a night as this—calm and sweet, the stars peeping through the boughs, and the windows shining. And that's how I like to think of him.

"He'd never been away from home before except to go to Paris. He talked like a feudal baron, seeming to think that life was just one long holiday; that no one had to earn a living; that things in general were constructed by an amiable Deity solely for our delectation; and there was in his attitude a recklessness and disregard for established usages that left me totally at a loss. Imagine a fellow like myself taught to regard card playing, the theater, and dancing as mortal sins, with a father who believed in infant damnation and predestination; a fellow brought up to gaze in silent admiration at Charles Sumner; and who was allowed a silver half-dollar a week pocket money—imagine me, I say, sitting out there with this free-thinking, free-hating, free-handed slave owner! Why, I loved him with my whole heart inside of five minutes. God bless my soul, how my father used to frown when they told him about my new friend's latest escapade! But with all his freedom of ideas he was as simple as a child. I don't believe the fellow ever had a mean or an impure thought. I believe that as I believe in God.

"Well, I told him about my life—what there was to tell—and he told me about his; how his father had died three

years before, leaving him the owner of very large estates and a great many hundred slaves—I forget how many. His mother was still living down on the plantation. They were Roman Catholics—' Papists,' my father called them. The doctrines of the Church, however, didn't seem to bother him at all, that I could see. His father had evidently been the big man of the county, and had shared all his sports and studies, cramming him with the most extraordinary amount of miscellaneous reading and curious Chesterfieldian ideas of honor and manners.

" I can remember, now, just how he described the old place to me, sitting out there on the steps. He thought it the finest home in all the land. Perhaps it was. I never had the heart to go there afterwards. One thing I remember was a grand old garden laid out in terraces, the walks bordered by box two hundred years old and as high as your head, where little red and green snakes curled up and sunned themselves—a garden full of old-fashioned flowers and fountains and sundials, and a water garden, too, with lilies of every sort; and there was a family graveyard right on the place where they had all been buried—where his father had been—with a ghost—a female ghost—named Shirley, I recall that, who flitted among the trees on misty mornings. Oh, it was a great picture! I'll never see that old place. Perhaps it's just as well. It couldn't have been as beautiful as he painted it. You see I'd been born in a twenty-one-foot red-brick house on Beacon Hill.

" Then as we were sitting there on the steps, I broad awake but in fairyland, out from under the trees shuffled Moses's quaint, crooked figure. Wanted to know if eb'ryt'ing was all right with young Marse. Azam and

Bhurtpore was fixed first-class, suh. An' he'd done got a little cubby-hole down in the stable to sleep in. Wuz dere any orders to-night, suh? An' what time should he bring Azam roun' in de mornin'?

"'Go 'long with Moses, Jim,' said Randolph. The dog obediently arose, stretched himself, and descended the steps.

"'Good night, Marse Dick,' said Moses.

"'Good night, Moses,' replied Dick. And the two, the darky and the dog, disappeared under the shadow of the elms."

Mr. Curtis knocked the ash from his extinct cigar and relit it at the top of the lamp chimney.

"I should just like to have seen him," remarked Ralph enthusiastically. "And to think that he really lived in this room. How did that happen? And which bedroom did he have?"

"The one on the left, nearest the door," replied Mr. Curtis.

Over in Stoughton some fool was strumming a banjo, singing "I'm a soldier now, Lizette"—rottenly. And some one else, of the same mind as myself apparently, leaned out of the window in the room above us and holloed:

"Oh, quit that! Try being a freshman a while! Lizette won't care."

Evidently the singer decided to follow the advice thus gratuitously given, for the banjo ceased. Then came one of those long silences when you felt instinctively that in a moment something might happen to spoil the excellent opportunity of it, throw us off the key as it were, or break its placid surface like an inconsequent pebble. But Ralph, in a singularly moderate tone, as if leading the

theme gently that it might not become startled and break away, continued:

"You said something about dueling pistols, you know."

Mr. Curtis looked at him with that same quizzical smile which my roommate had called forth before.

"That's it. All you want is gunpowder, treason, and plot. My feeble attempt at character sketching has been a failure. Well, now to your dessert."

"You are entirely wrong," said Ralph, rather mortified. "Randolph must have been a perfect corker. I wish we had some chaps like that in 19—. But the Southerners nowadays all seem to go to Chapel Hill, or William and Mary, or Tulane, or some of those God-forsaken places where I don't believe they even have a ball nine. Only, naturally, I wanted to make sure of the bullet hole. You see," he added cunningly, "that bullet hole is the thing that links us together. That's how we'll know when you've gone that it wasn't all a dream."

Mr. Curtis laughed outright.

"You're a funny boy," said he. "Well, two or three days later I asked Randolph to room with me. The matter was easily adjusted, and Moses spent nearly a week in fixing up this den here with what he called 'Marse Dick's contraptions.' Save the old picture there, there's not a thing in the place that suggests the room as it looked then. From extreme meagerness, if not poverty, of furniture it sprang into opulence—almost ornately magnificent it seemed to me with my conservative New England tastes and still more conservative New England pocketbook. I remember a silver-mounted revolver was always lying on one end of the mantelpiece, while in the center was a rosewood case of pistols, curious affairs,

with long octagonal barrels, and stocks inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver.

"Randolph soon became a celebrity. He could no more avoid being the most conspicuous figure in Cambridge than he could help addressing his acquaintances as 'suh.' And in spite of his natural reserve, a quality which was curiously combined with entire ease in conversation, he soon acquired a large acquaintance and rather a following.

"Needless to say, I became his almost inseparable companion. Dick's second hunter, Bhurtpore, had been placed entirely at my service, and scarce a day passed that autumn without our scouring the country roads for miles around, followed by three or four of the hounds. Jim, the mastiff, while we were absent on these excursions, spent his time lying beneath the ebony table in Holworthy awaiting our return.

"Randolph tried unsuccessfully to organize a hunt. It soon appeared that Azam and Bhurtpore were the only hunters in Cambridge, and polo had not yet been introduced into this country. Frequently we would take a circle of twenty miles in the course of an afternoon, galloping up quiet old Brattle Street, out around Fresh Pond, until we struck the Concord turnpike, which we followed over Belmont Hill, down past an old yellow farmhouse with blue blinds, at the juncture of the highway to Lexington and what we called the 'Willow Road,' and then under the overarching boughs, through soggy fields full of bright clumps of alders, until the fading light of the afternoon warned us that it was time to turn our horses' heads in the direction of Cambridge."

"We have a Polo Club," said Ralph, "but we haven't any horses."

"Well, now, to get down to your bullet hole," continued Mr. Curtis. "Hazing, of course, was an ordinary affair, and it was not uncommon to see a pitched battle of fisticuffs going on behind some college building.

"Now, mind you, the hazing was not done by the best men, but by the worst, and it was always the tougher elements in the sophomore class that availed themselves of this method of showing that they were feeling their oats. Every one of us looked forward, sooner or later, to getting his dose, and any freshman who smoked cigars and kept a nigger might have expected it as a matter of course. But Dick was a chap that did just as he pleased, and did it with such a confounded air—the '*bel air*,' you know—that you'd have thought we were all a parcel of cavaliers walking in a palace garden. I don't blame them for feeling that he ought to be taken down a peg, when you take everything into consideration.

"For example, imagine his kissing old Mrs. Podridge's hand at a faculty tea! Of course the antiquated thing liked it, but it was so conspicuous. And worse than all, inviting Prex into his room to have a cigar and a glass of Madeira! Think of that! The queer part of it was that Prex nearly accepted the invitation.

"'Why not?' said Dick, in answer to my expostulation. 'Do you mean that in the North one gentleman cannot, without criticism, extend to another the hospitality of his own room?'

"It was all in the point of view. What could you say?

"Some carping fellows spread a canard that Randolph was trying to introduce slavery into Cambridge. Dick did not even notice it sufficiently to direct Moses to display his manumission papers. Of course there was

a deal of talking about him, mostly good-natured chaff, and had it not been for Watkins I doubt if anything would have happened. This person was an ill-conditioned, dissatisfied fellow who had come from a small town in Rhode Island with a considerable amount of the initial velocity arising out of local prestige, which, wearing off, left him in a miserable state of doubt as to what to do to rehabilitate himself in the garments of distinction. As you would say, he 'had it in' for Randolph for no reason in the world. Dick was just too good-looking, too prosperous, too independent—that was all. He had an idea, I suppose, that if he could knock the statue off its pedestal he might perhaps occupy the vacant situation.

"One evening I inquired carelessly of Randolph what he should do if the sophomores tried to haze him. He replied, nonchalantly, that he should exercise the sacred right of self-defense as circumstances might require. If anyone tried to interfere with him he must take the consequences. In certain situations the only thing to do was to shoot your aggressor. I looked up to see if he were joking, but his face was entirely serious.

"Another chap who was sitting there laughed and slapped his knee. I can see now that it was just this kind of thing that gave Randolph's enemies some color for saying that he was a sort of crazy fool. Perhaps I was playing Sancho Panza to his Don Quixote, after all.

"Presently a lot of other fellows joined us, and by the time Moses appeared we had disposed of a couple of bottles of old Port, from under Dick's bed, and were loudly declaiming our loyalty to the Old Dominion and consigning the class of '63 to eternal torment. In the

midst of the uproar some one grabbed Moses and shoved him upon the steps, shouting 'Speech! Speech!' What put the idea into his head I can't imagine—probably antislavery speeches in the square which he had overheard.

"'Gem'men,' he began, 'I'se not 'customed ter makin' speeches outa meetin', 'specially ter gem'men like you-all, but I'se got suthin' I'se been a-studyin' ober an' what's a-worryin' me, what I'd like ter say. It's des' 'bout Marse Dick. I des' come from down de street whar I done hear some gem'men a-speechifyin' 'bout him an' me. Dey says' (his voice rose indignantly) 'dat Marse Dick didn't hab no business fo' ter hab me here. Dat he didn't hab no right ter hab me work fo' him nohow, or Old Marse; an' dey calls Marse Dick some mighty mean names. Now I des' 'ud like ter know ef I ain't Marse Dick's boy an' why he ain't got no right fo' ter hab me work fo' him. Didn't I work fo' Old Marse 'fo' he died, an' didn' my ole man work fo' him, an' ain't I allus been a-workin' fo' Ole Miss and Missy Dorothy? Him an' me's been bred up togedder; I'se been a-totin' with him eber since he wuz born, ain't I, Marse Dick?'

"He paused amid a dead silence. None of us spoke. I looked at Randolph and saw that he was gripping his pipe hard between his teeth.

"'Well, gem'men, I doesn't want leab Marse Dick, ef I is a free nigger, an' I doesn't want you ter let 'em tek me away from him, cuz he got no one else ter look out fo' him, an' Azam an' Bur'pore an' de dogs, an' Ole Miss say when I lef' de Hall how I was neber to leab Marse Dick—nohow. An', gem'men, you won't let 'em, will yer?'

"He waited for our assurance. Oh, the constraint of

generations of New England character! It was so difficult for us to say what we felt. Dick was staring out under the trees with glistening eyes. Some fellow made a few halting remarks and said we'd stick up for him and Moses to the last man, and then we all pounded Moses on the back, and Dick got out some more Port and we had another toast, but something had hit us hard."

Mr. Curtis closed his eyes and leaned back his head for a moment as if trying to recall some forgotten memory.

"The next evening," he continued presently, "we were both sitting before the fire. Jim lay as usual beneath the table, his head pointing toward the door. The lamps had not yet been lit and the windows, I remember, were open, for the day had been warm—one of those Cambridge Indian-summer days. From the lower end of the Yard came a confused murmur of voices, mingled with occasional shouts. The voices grew louder, and shortly there came a loud cheer, followed by the tramp of many feet. I stepped to the window and saw through the dusk a cluster of men moving slowly up the sidewalk by Massachusetts Hall. In a moment I realized that the time might be at hand for the application of my roommate's recently declared principles. With a distinct feeling of apprehension I drew in my head and was about hurriedly to suggest a walk, when there came the sound of flying feet, and Moses, with scared face and starting eyes, burst into the room.

"'Oh, Marse Dick,' he cried in a trembling voice, 'dey's a-comin' ter kill yer an' tek me away from yer. Dey's goin' ter hurt yer dreffull! Doan' let 'em do it, Marse Curtis!'

"Dick had risen quietly and was now engaged in

lighting the lamp upon the center table, while I shut and locked both door and windows. Jim got up from his place beneath the table and watched us uneasily. The noise of the crowd grew nearer. Then suddenly I heard a sharp click behind me and turned to see Randolph holding one of the silver-mounted pistols which he had taken from its case upon the mantel. He was calmly engaged in loading.

"'Look here, Dick!' I cried, 'for Heaven's sake put that back!'

"Before I could say another word our assailants entered the hallway of the building. There came a babel of voices, followed by a loud pounding upon the door. We returned no answer. Then there were shouts of:

"'Run him out!'

"'Liberty forever!'

"'No slaves in Harvard!'

"'Smash in the door!'

"This last suggestion was accompanied by a yell and a rush against the door, which swayed inward, and, the lock snapping, burst open. There was an instant's hesitation on the part of the men outside; then they began to surge through the narrow doorway. Randolph quickly raised his pistol.

"'Back!' he shouted. 'Leave the room!' Instinctively they retreated. I can see them now, crowding out through the doorway. Just here, where I am sitting, in the full light of the lamp, stood Randolph, the barrel of his pistol glistening wickedly. There was a cold gleam in his eyes and a drawn look about his mouth. Before him stood Jim, tail switching, and lips curled back in a snarl that showed all his sharp teeth, while in the background cowered Moses, fear pictured upon every

feature, his eyeballs gleaming white in the shadowy doorway of the bedroom.

"'I warn you, gentlemen,' said Randolph haughtily. 'I order you to leave the room. I shall shoot the first man that crosses my threshold.'

"'Bosh!' cried a voice. 'Hear him!'

"'D——d slave owner!' shouted another.

"'Throw him out!'

"Watkins thrust himself forward.

"'Bah! I'm not afraid of any rum-drinking Southerner! He hasn't the nerve to shoot!'

"'Look out!' called some one.

"There was a sudden rush from outside and Watkins either sprang or was pushed, probably the latter, through the door. At the same instant there was a flash, a report, a snarl, a loud cry, a tumult of feet. The smoke cleared slowly away, showing the door empty. Across the threshold lay a sophomore, while over him stood Jim, motionless, with his feet on the man's chest and his teeth close to his face.

"Randolph laid the smoking pistol upon the table and pointed grimly to a splintered crack in the strip above the door.

"'Come here, Jim!' he called. The dog unwillingly drew away, still eying the man on the floor, who, finding himself unhurt, began to blubber loudly.

"'You are free, suh,' remarked Randolph scornfully. 'Don't let me detain you.'

"Watkins slowly and fearfully scrambled to his feet, and then, like a flash, vanished into the darkness.

"'Golly, Marse Dick,' exclaimed Moses in an awe-struck voice, 'I thought you'd killed that gem'man, sho'!'

"'Back,' he shouted."

"'Give us a glass of brandy, Moses!' said his master, extinguishing the light. 'Where are they, Jack?'

"I raised the window and looked out. The sophomores were gathered in an excited group about Jim's victim, gazing at our window, and talking loudly among themselves. Randolph reloaded the pistol and stepped to the door.

"'Pleased to see you at any time, gentlemen,' he said. 'But just now I want to go to bed and don't like noise. Don't let me keep you. While I sometimes miss a single bird I'm not so bad at a covey. Now off with you!'

"Again he whipped up the pistol into position. It looked even more wicked in the starlight than it had done inside. With one accord the crowd broke and ran, Watkins well in the lead.

"Randolph came inside, lighted the lamp, and tossed off the brandy.

"'By Gad, suh,' he drawled with a laugh. 'They really thought they were going to be murdered. You Yankees don't seem gifted with any sense of humor. Here, Moses, run around to my friends' rooms and give them my compliments and invite them all to the tavern for a bowl of punch.'"

Ralph clapped his hands together.

"Right in this very room!" he cried, "right in this room!" Then he jumped to his feet and again critically examined the door. "Just as fresh as ever!" he remarked delightedly. "Why, but that Randolph was a ripper! And to think it all happened right between these four walls and we never have heard a word about it before!"

"Tell us some more about him," said I. "What did the faculty say?"

"The faculty considered the case," replied Mr. Curtis, "but we never heard from them in regard to it. Of course the story got all around the college and Watkins was unmercifully guyed. But he had his turn."

"How was that?" inquired Ralph. "Do go on."

"I don't know," returned Mr. Curtis. "What do you think of Randolph?"

"The best ever!" pronounced Ralph with conviction.

"It's hard to resist such an enthusiastic audience—and so insistent," smiled Mr. Curtis. "Well, they let him alone after that, and he pursued the even tenor of his way and increased in wisdom and stature and in favor—at least with man.

"I can only tell you about Randolph's leaving college, and that takes me to those sadder times of which I spoke. It was late in the spring, when none of us had any longer time or inclination to think of college distinctions or college jealousies. We were all overwhelmed at the thought of the impending conflict. Already most of the Southerners had departed for their homes.

"You see, I'm trying to give you an impression—a picture of a chap I believe to have been one of the truest gentlemen that ever came here—I feel you're entitled to know whose room it is you occupy and to share in these memories, which are, after all, the best thing left in my lonely old bachelor existence. When I tell you the rest and how we parted never to meet again you won't be able to get a true understanding of it unless you can grasp the real spirit of the times, the environment, the intensity of the whole affair.

"Here I was rooming with a flamboyant Southerner who fully intended to enlist as soon as his native State should declare herself, when four of my uncles had al-

ready joined the Union army. Of course I wanted to go, but my father wouldn't hear of it. The whole miserable business only drew Randolph and me the closer together. I do not think that his performance with the pistol had increased his popularity; in fact, the sympathies of the undergraduates seemed on the whole to be with Watkins, and the general sentiment that he was the aggrieved party. If Dick had taken his medicine in good part it would doubtless have been better for him in the end. You see, it gave his slanderers a handle and they made the most of it. Neither did he abate any of those idiosyncrasies of which I have spoken, but simply out of bravado, I suppose, rather let himself go. His cravats increased in brilliancy, his waistcoats multiplied their colors, and he was always careering around on Azam through the Yard and Harvard Square. He had a trick of riding suddenly out of nowhere, and appearing at recitations on horseback, turning his beast over to Moses at the door until the lecture had concluded. I have known Randolph at this period to keep his horse waiting an hour in order that he might ride him the length of the Yard. Don't get the impression that I am criticising him unfavorably; I am merely endeavoring to give you the point of view of the outsiders who didn't like him. By April the class was pretty evenly divided on the Randolph question. To half of us he was a rather Quixotic hero—to the rest a sort of cheap *poseur*. Watkins was untiring in his innuendoes, and in this he was aided to a considerable extent by the bitterness of the feeling between North and South. Of course, everything possible was being done to conciliate the Southern States, and it was the aim of the entire North to avert if possible an open rupture. At the theaters the most popular music

was the old Southern airs and plantation melodies, and the audiences conscientiously cheered when 'Dixie' was played. Naturally this was vastly gratifying to Randolph, who failed, it seemed to me, to realize its significance. I don't think that anyone really believed actual hostilities would occur.

"Then like a lash across our faces came the firing on Sumter. The whole North gasped and then the blood boiled in our veins. Right here under these trees the war fever burned hottest.

"That night will never be forgotten by the class of '64. A huge gathering of students filled the Yard, lights twinkled in all the windows, torches flared here and there among the tree trunks, while between Stoughton Hall and where Thayer now stands, just in front of these very windows, the fellows concentrated in a solid mass, cheering the Union again and again, as flights of rockets burst high above the trees, sending down their floating canopies of sparks. Into that big elm, out there, some of the seniors were hoisting a transparency, bearing upon one side the words, 'The Constitution and Enforcement of the Laws,' and upon the other, 'Harvard for War.'

"I was sitting in this window—Randolph in that. Perhaps I should have been out on the grass shouting with the others, but the loneliest fellow in Cambridge was at my side. Poor old chap! No wonder he was gloomily silent. Outside the cheering continued and the rockets roared away over the tops of the old buildings, until the students, forming into an irregular procession, marched away singing patriotic airs, some to go to their rooms, but most to pass the remainder of the evening at the tavern, discussing the President's proclamation.

"Dick got up quietly and came over to the window.

'Jack,' he said sadly, 'the game's about up with me. I can't stay here any longer. Now that war is an actuality, I must go home, and the sooner the better.'

"'But Virginia hasn't seceded,' I answered, 'and most likely won't. If she does there will be time enough for you to go.'

"'Virginia *will* secede,' he replied, 'and blood will be shed in this cursed quarrel within two weeks. I can't stay here when I might be at home helping on the cause. I shall think you are acting from interested motives,' he added, smiling.

"'What does your mother say?'

"'That's the trouble. She wants me to stay.'

"I read the letter which he handed me. It was plain enough. The good lady desired to keep her only son out of harm's way just as long as possible, although through it all I could perceive her consciousness of the futility of any idea of preventing a Randolph from taking an active part, in the event of the secession of his native State. I urged parental duty and the foolishness of taking for granted something that might not happen at all. He, of course, was keen for fighting anyhow, but he was prepared to stand by his State's decision.

"Of course, you couldn't blame a woman for wanting to keep her only son from throwing his life away. From the very first I had a presentiment that that was what it would amount to, and I was for doing all I could to help her carry out her purpose.

"But as the days dragged on it became harder and harder to keep Randolph in Cambridge. You see, by that time he was practically the only Southerner left there, and he found himself in a strangely awkward, not to say painful, position. Even some of his friends, while

their manner toward him remained the same, ceased to come as frequently to our room.

"We kept trying to deceive ourselves all along about the seriousness of the crisis. None of us did much studying—Randolph, none at all. He rode about the country or sat in his room reading his last letters from the Hall, fretting to get away from Cambridge. Nor did his continued presence pass uncommented upon by the more fiery of our student patriots.

"Several anonymous letters suggesting that his presence in Cambridge was undesirable had been left at his room, while, quite accidentally of course, it frequently happened that the sidewalk in front of our windows was selected as the forum for vehement denunciation of the South, of slavery and slaveholders. Randolph gripped his pipe grimly between his teeth and held his head higher than ever. Once he actually tried to address a meeting in front of the post office on the Inherent Right of Secession. But he was groaned down. While few of us had been Abolitionists we were now all Unionists, and '*Harvard was for war.*'

"After this experience I noticed a change in his demeanor, for there were among that shouting, hissing crowd several who had been his friends. Although he must have known that Virginia's supposed loyalty was but a pretext on the part of his mother to keep him out of danger, his devotion to her was such that he remained without a word to bear the whips and scorns of time and the humiliation of his position, waiting manfully until the official action of the government of Virginia should set him free.

"It must have been exquisite torture for a chap of his high spirit to be obliged to hear his principles and

those of his father denounced on every side, and the South that he really loved with all his heart charged with treachery and infidelity.

"In those days the top story of Dane was used by the upper classmen and the members of the Law School as a debating hall, their discussions being frequently marked by personalities and a bitterness of invective unparalleled even in the national Senate and House of Representatives. After the firing upon Sumter these meetings grew more and more turbulent, and were held almost daily.

"Randolph had at last made up his mind that he would wait but a week longer at the latest, and had notified his mother of his decision. He intended to leave Cambridge on April 18th, and nothing that I could say had been able to shake his determination. I am inclined to believe that the action of Virginia on the question of secession would not have made any difference to him at this time. We had watched the departure of the Sixth and Eighth Massachusetts regiments for Washington, and you can easily imagine how irksome his enforced inaction must have been. All his arrangements had been completed and he and Moses were to leave Boston on an early morning train for the South.

"The morning of the 17th dawned clear and brilliant. I left Dick and Moses packing books and dismantling the room, and walked across the Yard to a recitation in Massachusetts Hall. After that I remember I attended a lecture in some scientific course, chemistry, I believe, in University, and about eleven o'clock wandered over to the square to see if there were any fresh war bulletins. A group of excited people was gathered about the telegraph office gesticulating toward a strip

of foolscap pasted in the window, and it was really unnecessary for me to push my way among them and read what was written there: '*Virginia secedes.*' The words had almost a familiar look—we had waited for them so long.

"With the intention of telling Randolph the news I hurried across the square. I did not get far, however. Just on the other side, tethered to a post in front of the door of Dane Hall, stood Azam. He whinnied when he saw me, for by this time we were old friends. His presence there could only mean that Dick was inside, and with a qualm of apprehension I pushed open the door and started up the stairs. From above came the hum of voices followed by confusion and silence. Then as I reached the landing I caught the tones of a familiar voice —Randolph's—and hurrying up the flight leading to the second story breathlessly opened the door into the hall. It was packed with students and hot almost to suffocation, while the grins on most of the faces of those near me showed plainly the state of their feelings toward the speaker.

"In the middle of the room, in a sort of cleared space, stood Randolph, dressed with his customary braggadocio in riding boots, spurs, and gauntlets. Whip and hat lay before him on the floor. The crowd were jeering, and his face was flushed with an angry red—a thing I'd never seen before.

"'Virginia has seceded,' he shouted, challenging the whole room with a defiant glance. 'I thank God for it! Had she remained three days longer in the Union I should have felt my native State humiliated. She has been the last to take up the sword against oppression. Now may she be the last to lay it down. For the last decade the

rights of Virginia and of the South have been trampled under foot. She has borne slander and insult. She has bowed to an unlawful interpretation of the Constitution and unjust administration of the laws. She has seen her lawful property snatched from her outstretched hands. They tell me she has rebelled—I rejoice that Virginia has resisted! Who dares say that a sovereign State, who by her assent alone was joined to a union of other States, has not the right to separate herself from them when such a partnership has become intolerable!'

"He was being continually interrupted by hisses and groans and sarcastic comments from all sides, but he continued unabashed:

"'Do you realize that you who once threw off the yoke of England have yourselves become oppressors and are trampling the sacred rights of others wantonly under foot? That you have become destroyers of liberty? Virginia!—Virginia—' His voice broke. Absurdly theatrical as it all was, I believe he had some of the fellows with him. Then Watkins shouted:

"'She is a traitor!'

"'That's a lie!' replied the orator fiercely.

"I never quite knew how Watkins had the nerve, but I suppose he thought that Randolph was down and out, and he may have really believed that poor Dick was just a swaggering braggart, after all. Anyhow, before any of us realized what had happened, he had sprung forward and struck Randolph in the face with his cap, exclaiming:

"'Take that, you *Reb*!'

"An extraordinary stillness fell upon us. I thought for a moment that Randolph would fall, for he turned deathly pale and his hands twitched as if he were going to have an epileptic fit. He swayed, recovered himself,

tried to speak, choked, and finally said in a hoarse whisper:

"'I suppose you understand what that means?'

"Then in the silence he stooped, picked up his whip and hat, and looking straight before him strode out of the hall. I followed automatically.

"The door behind us shut out a tremendous roar of laughter, in which could be distinguished cries of 'You're done for now, Watkins!' 'Better make your will, old chap!' We were hardly clear of the building before the whole meeting adjourned with a rush, pounding down the stairs with such impetuosity that it is a wonder they didn't carry the rickety structure along with them.

"Shades of John Harvard and Cotton Mather! A duel was to be fought in Harvard College! The rumor flew from the college pump to the tavern; it sprang from lip to lip—from window to window; sneaked by professors' houses in silence; and burst into garrulity upon the steps of Hollis and Stoughton. If you had asked one from the jocular groups gathered in front of the different buildings and upon the gravel paths what was to pay, he would probably have replied with a twinkle in his eye, '*Virginia has seceded.*'

"I must confess to you that I felt like a fool. It was the same feeling that I had experienced in a lesser degree when my cavalier had kissed the hand of old Mrs. Podridge, but now it was clear I was playing Sancho Panza in earnest. I had followed Dick to the room and pleaded with him in vain. He was impervious to argument. There could be only one thing done under the circumstances. There was no question about it at all. He failed utterly to comprehend my alleged attitude in the case, or at any rate pretended to do so. Why hadn't

he thrashed Watkins then and there? Simply because by so doing he'd have made himself nothing more nor less than a common brawler. It was not a case of a street fight, but of insulting a man's honor.

"Of course I might have thrown him over. But somehow I couldn't leave Randolph to face the music all alone, and I knew well enough that laughter would be far harder for him to bear than the actual hatred or disapproval of his associates. And then he was going away the following morning and I might never see him again.

"I'd hoped, and in fact expected, that Watkins would laugh in my face when I submitted Randolph's challenge. It would have been quite in keeping with the fellow's character and past performances, but he took the wind entirely out of my sails by the gravity with which he listened to what I had to say, and unhesitatingly chose '*pistols at twenty paces.*' Up to that time I'd felt merely that Dick had made an ass of himself and had rather unnecessarily dragged me into it, but now the other aspect of the thing —that I might become the accessory to a homicide— caused me a feeling of revolt against having anything to do with the affair.

"I completed my arrangements with Watkins's second, a fellow named Scott, as quickly as possible, leaving to him most of the details. And then Dick and I took a long ride together in the country, supping at a farmhouse and not reaching home until after nine o'clock.

"Randolph roused me from fitful slumbers early next morning by holding the lamp to my face, and I saw that he was fully dressed.

"'You haven't been to bed at all!' I cried in reproach.

"'I had no time. I've been writing,' he replied, as

he replaced the lamp in the study. A dim suggestion of the dawn came through the windows, and the complete silence was broken only by the snapping of the fire which Moses had kindled and over which he was boiling coffee. While I hurried into my clothes Dick reëntered my room with a packet in his hand and sat down upon the bed.

"'Jack,' said he, cheerily enough, 'of course there's no use disguising things. The beggar may wing me, and if anything happens I want you to take this to my mother. I'd like you to have the horses and—and Jim. You'll see that Moses gets back, won't you?'

"'O Dick!' I almost sobbed. 'Of course I'll do exactly as you say, but it's not too late, and perhaps Watkins will apologize or agree to fight it out with fists. What's the use of shooting at each other?'

"'You can't understand!' he sighed. 'Well, here's the packet. Don't forget now.' He began to whistle 'Dixie' and oil his pistols. Two years later I learned that his father had been killed in a duel at Paxton Court House.

"'Coffee's ready,' announced Moses. 'Look out, Marse Curtis, it's hot.' He laid two smoking cups upon the table, and Dick poured a finger of brandy into each.

"'To the cause!' said he with a gay laugh.

"'To the cause!' cried I.

"And we drained them—each to his own.

"From a distant steeple came four widely separated and mournful notes.

"'We must be off!' exclaimed Dick, throwing on his greatcoat. 'Have the horses at the bridge, Moses, in twenty minutes.'

"He thrust his pistol into his pocket and linking his arm through mine led me into the Yard. A cold mist

hung over the lawn and the red buildings looked black in the vague light. A silence as of the grave was everywhere. At certain angles the windows looked out like blank, whitish, dead faces.

"'On a morning like this,' remarked Dick, 'my great-aunt Shirley should be about. Joyful, isn't it?'

"I was in no mood for joking. Already the effect of the brandy had vanished and a chill was creeping through my body. My arm trembled and Randolph felt it.

"'Dear me, Jack!' he cried as we passed out into the Square, 'this will never do! Cheer up, man! Ague is contagious at this hour of the morning.'

"I made a heroic effort to restrain the dance of my muscles. Our steps made a loud rattling on the cobble-stones of the Square, but we met no one and were soon well on our way to the river. As we trudged along the sky grew lighter, and crossing the bridge I noticed that the roofs of old Cambridge showed black against the whiteness of the dawning. Everywhere the mist covered the downs with a thick mantle, and a light breeze had sprung up, which set it drifting and swirling fantastically. The creaking of the draw was the only sound in the heavy silence, save the lapping of the water against the sunken piles, and behind us the faint clatter of hoofs which told us that Moses was on his way.

"We left the road and started across the downs, and the mist thinned as the day neared its breaking. A quarter of a mile away three figures moved slowly along the river.

"'Who's the third man?' asked Randolph.

"'Watkins wanted a doctor,' I replied. He gave no answer, but strode rapidly over the harsh grass and dry

reeds of the marshy fields. No note of bird added touch of life to the gray scene, and the three dim shapes before us seemed more like phantoms than fellow-creatures. Although warm from our half-mile walk, a cold perspiration broke out all over my body and I once more lost control of my muscles. Indeed, had not Dick pulled me somewhat roughly on, I doubt if my legs could have held me up, so intense was my fear of what was coming.

"Scott, as we approached, came to meet us, and without further formality paced off the distance. Then, quite as if it were a common affair with him, he examined the priming of our pistols and offered them to me for selection. I took one, almost dropping it in my nervousness, and passed the weapon to Dick, who pressed my hand for a moment before relinquishing it. Hardly a word had been spoken, and before I knew it the two were in their places. The spot chosen was in a bend of the sluggish river, and at this point the mist had entirely blown away. Each raised his pistol and took aim, just as the first claret streaks of dawn shot up into the east. The water swept by, oily and purple, with here and there a swirl of iridescent color. A heron rose with a roar of flapping wings and rustled away into the mist, squawking harshly, and the strong, salt breath of the sea floated across the marshes and set me sneezing.

"'One!' called Scott sharply. 'Two — three — Fire!'

"The two reports seemed but as one, two tiny spurts of white smoke leaped from the pistols, there was a sharp groan, and Watkins reeled, staggered, and fell upon his back among the reeds, his left hand grasping convulsively at a tuft of grass beside him. Randolph stood motionless with the smoking pistol in his hand, his eyes

riveted upon the body on the ground, over which both the doctor and Scott were bending anxiously. Then the latter raised himself with a look of horror on his face, and said wildly:

"'O God! You've killed him!'

"'How is he, doctor?' asked Randolph unemotionally.

"The doctor placed his hand to the heart of the man on the ground. Then he announced:

"'He is dead. His heart has ceased to beat.'

"I don't know exactly what happened after that. I think I fainted, for I have a dim recollection of some one thrusting a handkerchief strong with ammonia into my face. But the first thing I rightly recollect is striding hand in hand with Randolph over the downs toward the bridge, where Moses was in waiting with the two horses.

"I was conscious of a hurried parting with Dick, of his saying that of course he could never come back, and that I must not think the less of him for what he had done, and that we must never forget one another. And then he leaped on Azam's back and galloped away in the direction of Boston with Moses riding hard behind him, just as the sun burst red above the roofs of Harvard College through the mist.

"I stood there for a moment and then I ran, ran anywhere, until I thought that I should drop; until the pain in my side seemed eating me up; and when I really came to my senses I found myself wandering on the high road hard by Lexington. I sneaked into the back door of a farmhouse and asked for some milk and bread, but the woman refused me and, I thought, looked at me with suspicion. Probably they were already arranging for my arrest and a warrant had been issued. Visions of a

trial as an accessory for murder in the East Cambridge court house, and of a judge with a black cap—a *hanging* judge—nearly crazed me with apprehension. But I had only myself to blame. I could have prevented it. He could not have fought alone. And I remember feeling rather sorry for Watkins—that he hadn't been such a bad fellow, after all. I lay under a tree most of the afternoon, and I can't say which emotion was uppermost, fear or regret. It never entered my mind that I should escape with anything less than a long term in State's prison.

"It came back to me again and again throughout that interminable afternoon, how, as I was hurrying with Dick across the downs after the fatal shot, and the sun had jumped above the roofs before us, I had turned for an instant and seen the doctor and Scott still bending over Watkins's body. Then, somehow realizing that flight was impossible, and feeling so utterly wretched that I cared nothing for what became of me, I begged a lift from a passing teamster most of the way back to Cambridge, and shortly after nine o'clock stealthily entered the College Yard. The dismantled room opened bare and empty like a sepulcher before me, and in its gravelike silence my steps echoed loudly as I crossed the floor and threw myself upon the window seat. With a rush the vanished happiness of our life together came over me. Never had any days been half so sweet as those we had passed in this very room. And now he had fled—a murderer—leaving me, his accomplice, to face the consequences alone.

"Presently a group of fellows came strolling up the walk and seated themselves upon the step by the window, where Dick and I had always sat. I resented their presence, for it only served to heighten my desolation. One

of them was evidently telling a funny story. For a moment or two I purposely paid no attention; then like a douche of cold water I recognized the voice. The revulsion of feeling almost sickened me.

"'Yes,' the jubilant Watkins was saying, 'didn't I always say he was an ass? Why, the trick would've been impossible on any less of a fool. Curtis can't be much better. When the pistols were produced Scott merely turned his back and had no difficulty in reloading them with graphite bullets, for the mist was pretty thick, and he says Curtis was shivering like a wet dog. All I had to do was a little play-acting and, while I assure you it is easier to play dead than to play doctor, Hunt carried out his part to perfection. In fact, the whole thing went off like a full-dress rehearsal. Randolph must be half-way to Virginia by this time. I reckon they'll make him colonel of a regiment when they hear he's killed a Yankee in a duel!'"

Mr. Curtis spoke with a shade of asperity in his voice, and from where I sat I could see disappointment in Ralph's face.

"Why go further?" continued Mr. Curtis. "I brazened it out as best I could and denounced the whole wretched performance as a piece of unmitigated cowardice which should brand Watkins forever as unworthy the society of self-respecting men. The college, as a whole, however, did not take that position, although I never suffered very heavily for my part in the proceeding.

"And now, boys, you've had the whole story, and you know, in part at least, something of what Randolph was like."

"I bet I know that Watkins!" exclaimed Ralph. "Was his name *Samuel J.* Watkins? There's a fellow

in our class named Samuel J. Watkins, Jr. He makes me tired. Sometimes his father comes out to see him—an old fellow with bedspring whiskers. He looks just mean enough to put up a trick like that."

"That was Watkins's name," admitted Mr. Curtis. "But he wasn't a bad fellow, after all, and later we became good friends." He took out his watch. "Heavens, it's half-past twelve! And to think I've been sitting here, the night before one of your examinations probably, dreaming away three hours and a half and boring you chaps to death. I had no idea it was so late."

"I am awfully glad you did," said Ralph. "I tell you we don't have men like that nowadays. At least I don't know of any. But what became of Randolph—afterwards?"

"Dick got it at Antietam!" he answered.

Both of us felt very much embarrassed. But then, as Mr. Curtis lit another cigar, picked up his hat and cane, and held out his hand, Ralph's insatiable curiosity got the better of him.

"And Moses—was that he with you to-day at the memorial service? We saw you, you know."

"Yes," replied Mr. Curtis. "After Mrs. Randolph's death Moses came North to live with me."

I thought Ralph had gone far enough, but I was rather glad afterwards that, as he took our guest's hand in parting, he said impulsively:

"I think Mr. Randolph was a splendid gentleman!"

THE END

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